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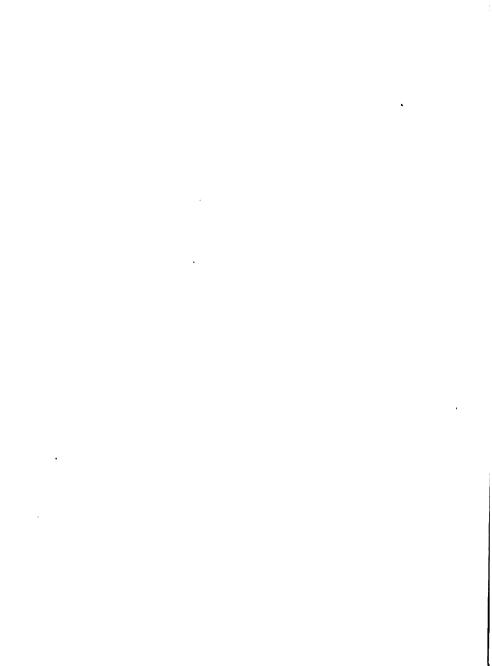
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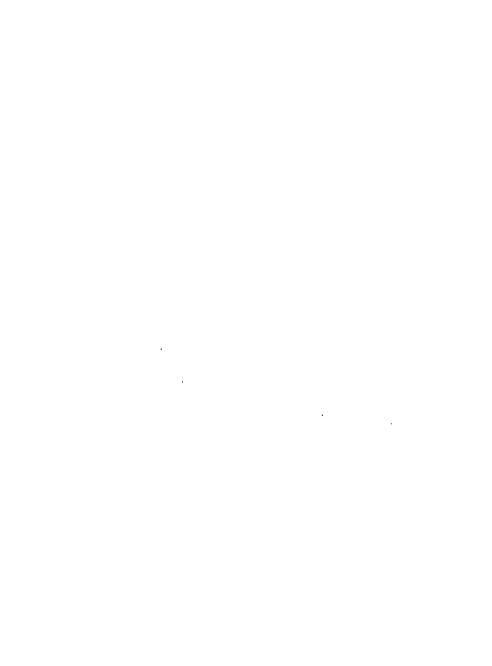
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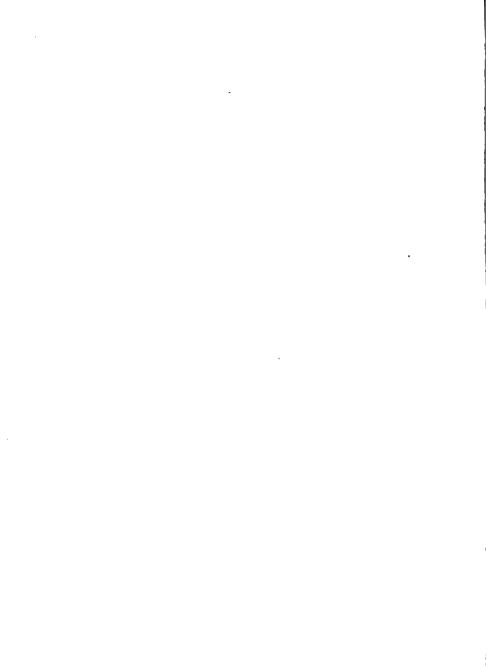




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"Gather up the Fragments."

N O T E S

IBLE LASSES.

By C. P.

TAKEN DOWN BY A LADY.

COLOSSIANS I. 1-8.

AND

PROVERBS II. 1-9.

LONDON:

S. W. PARTRIDGE & Co., 9, PATERNOSTER ROW. THE CHRISTIAN BOOK SOCIETY, 22, KING WILLIAM STREET, STRAND.

101. e. 388

"Gather up the Fragments."

NOTES

OF

BIBLE LASSES.

By C. P.

LONDON:

S. W. PARTRIDGE & CO., 9, PATERNOSTER ROW.

THE CHRISTIAN BOOK SOCIETY, 22, KING WILLIAM STREET, STRAND.

1860.

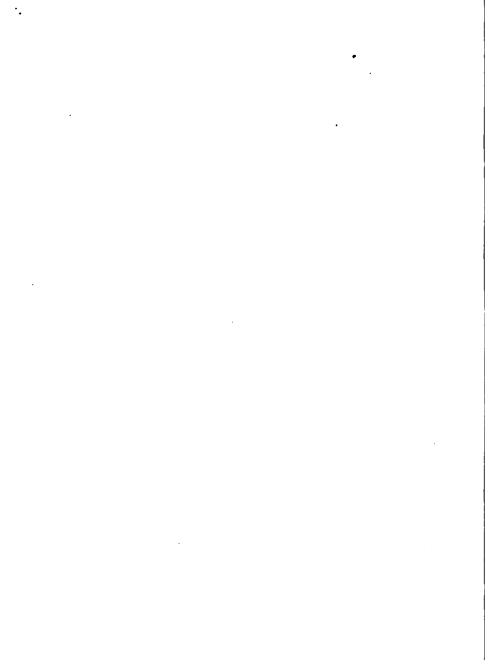
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A STRONG desire has been expressed by many of the members of Mrs. Pennefather's Bible Classes, that her lessons from the Word of God, and the valuable practical hints they receive from her, might, in a printed form, become more permanent, and also reach those friends who, residing at a distance from London, would gladly share in the benefit of her scriptural instruction.

Yielding to the request conveyed to her, Mrs. Pennefather has kindly consented to allow a few notes, taken from her extempore Addresses by a Lady present at the Classes, to be issued in a series.

These Notes are necessarily of a fragmentary character, as questions are constantly asked and new subjects are brought forward arising out of such inquiries.



EXTRACT FROM A LETTER ADDRESSED TO FEMALE WORKERS.

MAY I say that I feel tremblingly anxious about our female helpers in the Lord's vineyard? May I say that I am every day less and less concerned (comparatively speaking) about plans and organizations in work, if only we can send our young workers to their Bible and their knees? It seems to me that we live in days when some, even of Zion's husbandmen, are delighting themselves in a crop which has "no deepness of earth" (observe the use of the word immediately in Mark iv. 5, 15, 16, 17), and that this is telling upon all our departments of labour. There is too much haste among us. We must have the incense and the fire, even though it be "strange fire." We must build the wall quickly, though it be at the risk of using "untempered mortar." We must be numerically strong, even though, in effecting it, we bring in the elements of essential weakness. Is this according to God's mind? Is this the teaching of God's word? Not the hosts of Israel's army were to overthrow the giant, but one David, who had been communing with God in the wilderness. Not the 32,000 men of war were to go out to fight the Midianites, but the 800 whom the Lord Himself selected at the waterside. I believe the yearning thought of the Master is sincerely laid on many of our hearts,—"the harvest is great, and the labourers are few,"—but then we are not quite satisfied with the Master's calm response, "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth labourers into His harvest." Uzzah did not stand alone when he dared not trust God with His own ark.

Again, may I say there is too much display among us? "Come with me, and see my zeal for the Lord," seems to be meeting our ears on every side. Oh, that we may not also hear the deep solemn "BUT" of Scripture comment! "But Jehu took no heed to walk in the law of the Lord God of Israel with all his heart" (2 Kings x. 16, 31). Dear sisters, I am writing to Christian women, and I say, what have we to do with publicity? Woman brought in the curse. Thank God, she is not now under it; for "when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman;" but she is under the law of subjection, which followed it (see Gen. iii. 16; 1 Tim. ii. 18—15); and while I believe this does not interfere with a large and blessed

amount of liberty in God's service, it does draw a line which ought not to be transgressed. I believe, too, that God has placed the corresponding line of limitation in the heart and conscience of every modest, teachable, truth-loving woman, and that much of the apologising language we hear, with regard to certain questionable movements, is nothing more or less than a self-excusing argument with Scripture and with conscience, reminding us of the language of Saul to Samuel: "Because I saw that the people were scattered, &c., I forced myself therefore, and offered a burnt offering" (1 Sam. xiii. 11, 12). Perhaps Scripture and conscience may return a similar answer to that of the prophet: "Thou hast done foolishly." There is one truth which possibly needs a more distinct place in some of our minds, viz., that the teaching of God's Spirit is never opposed to the teaching of His word, and that consequently no one can be called by God to any course of action which contradicts the plain precepts of the Bible. Now I ask you to take the whole bearing of New Testament teaching with regard to woman's service, then go to your Risen Saviour, with Mary's love in your heart, and Mary's Rabboni on your lips, and I am very sure you will not find your sphere of usefulness too narrow.

Once more, may I say, there is too little "Prepared-

ness" (2 Tim. ii. 21), too little "Furnishing" (2 Tim. iii. 17), among us? This "prepared unto every good work,"—what does it mean? Look at the "Purge" which goes before, and the "Flee" that follows.

These are not pleasant words to flesh and blood. God's preparing school is not generally in earth's pleasant places: it is the cold and silent cavern, where "the corn of wheat dies;" it is the dark and weary night, when the wrestler "halts upon his thigh;" it is the deep and lonely valley, where the sufferer learns to say, amid strong crying and tears, "Father, not as I will, but as Thou wilt." Dear friends, what do we know of this? Alas, we sometimes feel as if we had only learnt how little we practically understand it, but this we surely do know, that while the idol of self is visibly enthroned among us—so easily elated by a little applause, so sorely chagrined by a little neglect—a disappointed apostle might say of us, as he once said of others, "When for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God" (Heb. v. 12). And then the "furnished unto all good works." I cannot enter much into it, because this too is a life-work, but it is not impossible, for God has placed the materials in your hand. Let not your own indolence leave the walls of

your house bare, when the chambers should "be filled with all precious and pleasant riches," nor your arm weak for the conflict, when you should be ready to meet every foe with the strong Sword of the Spirit. (Will you look at some of the blessed results of this "furnishing," as we find it in the section of Psalm cxix., beginning at v. 97?)

Dear sisters, can you bear with me, if I say one word more?

We have heard much during the last few days about discipleship, cross-bearing, following the Lord fully, separation from the world, &c. Did it ever occur to you that our crosses may probably lie in the path of our most natural indulgences? And further, that outward adornment is not an unusual channel for woman's indulgence? Again, did it ever strike you that the dress of Christian women is considered sufficiently important to be dwelt upon very distinctly in the Word of God (see 1 Tim. ii. 9; 1 Pet. iii. 3), and that not one article of the apparel worn by the haughty daughters of Zion, in the days of Israel's degeneracy, escaped the eye and the record of Israel's God (Isaiah iii. 16, &c.)? With regard to ourselves, I will only say that I believe we are utterly in fault in this matter. and that our guilty laxity is one of the many means by which our great enemy endeavours to weaken the

force of holy testimony among the handmaidens of the Lord.

And now, dear friends, forgive me if I have said too much. I do it under a deep sense of weakness and conscious shortcoming; but we are banded in loving membership to try and help one another, and "even those members which seem to be more feeble are necessary."

Oh, that we may daily "grow up into Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ" (Ephes. iv. 15)!

C. Pennefather.



^{**} It has been thought not out of place to insert this extract from a letter written to an Association of Workers connected with the Mildmay Conferences.

NOTES OF BIBLE CLASSES.

The Jemale Workers' Class.

Col. i. 1-5.

"Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timotheus our brother,

"To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

"We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you,

"Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which we have to all the saints.

"For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the Gospel."

THIS is a beautiful opening. There is something very expressive in these words: "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God." It was all St. Paul wanted, to hold his office "by the will of God." It is as if he said: "There may be circumstances of deep trial connected with my office; there may be moments when I am utterly crushed; but I can bear it all, for it is by His will such a weak one is holding this apostolic position."

I believe St. Paul's mind was of the highest order his keenness of perception the most acute; and this made him peculiarly sensible of the high calling and of his great unfitness for it. According to the power of the intellect, is the sense of deficiency. Everything the finite mind has ever seen or thought is just a speck; as we reach forward, and as we discover what lies before us, we see how far we are behind. So it is as we compare ourselves with God, the perfect One, the Centre of all perfection. The one who sees most what Christ is, is the most humbled though the most exalted. The sight of Christ in His perfections and in His holy walk lays us in the very dust. But then that perfect One is the Head of the body of which we are part; and thus, when we realise we are part of that body of which He is the Head, and lose our individuality, we are lifted up. As we look at ourselves in this corporate capacity, we see that we are so united to Christ that His sympathies, His glory, and, by-and-by, His throne, we share. It is all revealed in this blessed Book; and though we are well-nigh confounded by the thought, yet so it is.

Thus, then, St. Paul became an apostle in much weakness and fear, but by the "will of God." If these little words were on our minds all day, how it would stop complaining and fretting at trifles! Cannot He make these very things which try us, and will He not make them, part of the discipline to prepare us

for His eternal service? Will not the Potter do rightly with His clay? We know the words on our English coins, "Dei gratia"—"By the will of God." It is just an acknowledgment of the realm that the sovereign is there by His divine will; and therefore the government of the country, whether we think it right or wrong, is permitted by Him. And so it is through all the ramifications of life. When we sit down to our varied work, we may think, "I could do better elsewhere:" but, oh, let us remember we are there by divine appointment. I think it is a feature of the times to say, "I will choose my own path: I will carve out for myself a line of action." Hundreds of Christians are misled by this wilfulness of spiritthis mistake in judgment. Oh, let us be willing, in true sincerity of heart, to serve, to wait, to hold this position or that; and if things seem to be going wrong, it calms the mind, and makes crooked things straight. I am quite sure that unsettling is the devil's work, and that he produces that restless state of mind which makes us dissatisfied with our position—ready to hurry hither and thither, and to run before the Lord when we should be following after. There is an instructive verse for us in these times (Prov. xxiv. 21): "My son, fear thou the Lord and the king: and meddle not with them that are given to change "given to change for its own sake.

"And Timotheus our brother." Here we see a second trait in St. Paul's character. It is remarkable

the way in which St. Paul takes Timotheus into union with himself, as if he would teach us that, instead of standing up in our own independence, we should be taking others into a portion of our work. The fact that St. Paul associated with himself those even far below him in spirituality and in attainment is very instructive. It does involve trouble to be associated. and yet it brings blessing. You remember, in writing to the Philippians, he does not say, "I write," but, "I and Timothy;" and we see the same in his Epistle to Philemon. Why should not we enter into this spirit. and allow others to join in our work, which we find so happy—not feeling hurt or fretted when some one steps in, and does that part which we thought we could do very well ourselves? And if there are trials. He will bless us in the very trials which arise from asso-It is evidently God's mind concerning us: He sent out Apostles, two and two, and He put it into the mind of St. Paul to take into union with himself another Christian heart.

I remember a remark made by a worldly man, who came in accidentally to a meeting where some Christian workers had met to consult together. The lady who was leading the meeting, and who knew him, was made uncomfortable and unhappy at seeing him. She would rather he had not come in just then. However, when their discussion was over, she went up to him, and said, "I am sorry you have had to listen to what I am sure must have been very uninteresting to you."

He answered, "At any rate, I have seen one thing which has interested me very much. You all seem so wonderfully united and happy together." Ah, the world knows there is such a thing as family affection, and recognises polite courtesy in society; but it is a cold thing—a copy, a mimic of the real. Is it not, then, worth while for us to bear this testimony to Christian union and fellowship before them? ought to lie much on our hearts to do so. And. as Christians, should we not go out of our way to any extent to avoid a jar among ourselves? are some things not worth talking about; but nothing is a trifle which touches Christian unity. I would go miles to rub out the smallest misunderstanding of the humblest member of the Church of God. "Let us step out of our way if there is not room for our brother to walk in the same path." Abram had a right to take the highest place—he was the elder, the uncle; but when a jar came between him and Lot, he said, "Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdsmen and thy herdsmen; for we be brethren. Is not the whole land before thee? Separate thyself, I pray thee, from me; if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left."

As if he said, "It must not be. I will waive my right: anything rather than strife; for this misunder-standing will be, in the eyes of the men dwelling

around, a dishonour to God." In our work, do let us go on that principle. The more we know of Christ, the more we can put up with little things which would tease and harass us. How often such little paltry things divide families! Let us give place sooner, even if it is our right. We ought to bear the stamp of the Master's new commandment: "By this shall all men know that we are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (St. John xiii. 35). I remember hearing of two people in a Christian congregation who were painfully separated through some misunderstanding. At last they found out it was a misunderstanding; and they would have given anything to have had it rubbed out: but neither of them could determine to make the first advance towards reconciliation,—each one thought the other should do so; and while they thus waited, the breach widened, and, I believe, was on this account never healed. Every hour anything of the sort is allowed to go on the devil is getting the advantage. Let us be willing, even if we are in the right, if we are the aggrieved ones, to take the first steps towards regaining friendship. For should not the children of God bear this testimony, "Love one to another"? It is a beautiful badge, and one all can have who are near the Saviour-the highly intellectual or the inferior mind, the educated or the uneducated; it is a mark which can be put upon every child of God, if only he have enough to do with the Master. We meet together to-night as those who are saved by Christ; and do we

not want to magnify His grace? Perhaps some will say, "We do love one another." I grant we do, but do we as much as we ought? Do we avoid the hindrances to love as we might do? Do we feel it to be the sacred thing it is, in which our God's honour is so much concerned that we are jealous? Do we cut off the sharp word that would leave a sting in the mind of one who heard it, remembering if a hard thing is said of another. it often remains in the mind, and coldness and distance are the result? The devil is doing everything he can to disunite God's dear family; we need to wait much upon our Father to prevent his succeeding. Praver, we know, brings to us God's power. When He puts much of the love of prayer in our hearts, it becomes a power to us which is beyond all else. "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty" (Psalm xci. 1). There we get power, God's power.

"To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (ver. 2).

Why does he use the word "saints" and then "faithful brethren"? Are they synonymous? We know there are no waste words in Scripture. When, therefore, an "and" is followed by another word, he intends to convey some additional meaning. It may be this: looking at them in their aspect God-ward, they are saints; in their aspect toward one another, they are faithful brethren. Saints are God's holy ones, holy in

His sight, and, as His saints, have to walk in holiness. He has said, "Be ye holy in all manner of conversation" (1 Peter i. 15). And "faithful brethren" implies a great deal: it implies you hold a position already, and as such you have your duties to discharge the one to the other. So we are brethren in Christ Jesus, and we are to be faithful brethren, faithful to Him and to each other. It is as if St. Paul had said, "Now, brethren, I want you to walk holily before God and in love and in faithfulness to man." This would include our being truthful to one another as well as loving. People confound love and weakness. A person may have much decision of character and yet have deep love. Love is not a weak thing: it is the power of God in the soul.

"In Christ which are at Colosse." It is the binding up in Christ which draws us closely together.

"Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." This is his usual form of benediction. He loves to dwell on that name, Jesus Christ: it is four times repeated in the first four verses. "Grace:" that word in a general sense means free favour, but used in this form has something peculiar to itself. It is the abounding felt blessing of a present God; it is that for which he wishes.

"Peace"—as the result of felt grace, which comes from Himself, utterly independent of man. The more we have of God's felt presence in the soul, the more there is of holy calm, the more utterly independent we are of those outward things which naturally disturb us. This peace is something only those know who have experienced it; truly, it passes knowledge, passes understanding, and, I am sure we may add, passes explanation.

"We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints" (ver. 3, 4).

"We give thanks," for what? for the faith, love, and hope. Ever since we heard of it we have begun to pray for you more earnestly. It seems as if the Apostles felt they must plead with greater eagerness for those who were believers. When we see the fruits of the Spirit manifested in the children of God, it gives us faith in praying for them. We know they are just in the place for blessing, under the shadow. We may plead for straying ones, but we cannot have half the confidence in praying for them as for those in the place of blessing. Oh, to be kept under the shadow! If we go into by-paths, we shall have many a heavy blow, many a severe scourging, and not all the prayers of our friends can keep us from the scourge and the whip. But when we see God's blessing descending upon a people or an individual, let us pray with greater earnestness for them: it is a pledge of what God will yet do, and wherever God's blessing comes enlargement follows. If God is enlarging His Church, let us take care that we do

nothing to narrow it. Our great point is to follow on where He leads. If you find God is especially blessing you in your work, follow it up, be diligent; do not say, "Now this work or this class has been blessed, I will go on to another;" but remember, the Master is there, and He wants all hands in His field. Harvest days will soon be over, the garnering days are drawing nigh; do not go somewhere else, but attend to this portion of the vineyard, and be found in your place. We are often leading where we ought to follow. St. Paul expected great things when he saw God beginning to work.

"The love which ye have to all the saints" (ver. 4). Happy church, which could love all the saints! We are not only to love those we personally like, or in whom we find some congeniality and sympathy of mind and taste: there is to be no picking and choosing, but "love to all the saints."

"For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel" (ver. 5). It often seems to me that we have lost a great deal in the Christian Church by losing sight of "the hope which is laid up for us in heaven." Hope in one sense is a present thing: its joy, its strength, and its animating power are ours now; but it has to do with the future, its subject matter is all in the future, and it is with this the Apostle is dealing.

It is what the Lord dealt with, when he said, "Great is your reward in heaven." It seems as if St. Paul were

saying, "Thank God! I know what is before you, the reward of your faith and love." Yes, he knew what would come of it all, and here he calls them to look forward to the joy set before them, laid up as in a treasure-house, which was filling every day. We may be assured, in accordance with Christ's promise, that for every act of service done here by His weak ones, and yet His faithful willing ones, there is a reward up there.

This is "the hope," although not the brightest part of it. The climax of all the faith and hope and love of earth will be the first sight of Jesus. But why drop any portion of God's truth? Why blot the word "reward" out of our Bibles, as though it must needs interfere with the sovereignty of God's free love? Shall we refuse certain parts of His revelation because our puny minds cannot find the links that will join the whole together? God has told us nothing that we can afford to lose.

A rainbow is a perfect thing, yet we only see a part of the circle; so with God's truth, we here see a bit of the arch, but not the perfect whole. It is only round the throne of God the rainbow is complete; and so it is only there we shall learn how all the doctrines fit, and how all the portions of His blessed Word are united together in perfect harmony. We are working, then, as the Colossians lived and worked, with a bright prospect before us—a hope laid up in heaven.

We see many toiling weeping ones now, but I thank God for them all, for I know their labours will not be in vain in the Lord. There is a crowning day coming, a harvest day not far off; a garner where blessed things are laid up for them in heaven, "whereof ve heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel." As much as to say, "When Christ was preached to you, there was a bright hope set before you; till then, you were without hope, without God, and, when it first beamed into your heart, it filled you with holy joy." The world can counterfeit a great deal, but a real joyous onwardlooking is given only by the Lord. In false religion, we often see much restless toiling, accompanied by a depression of spirit; it has not got the spring of this real actuating hope, which enables us to pass through difficulties and surmount obstacles. When we are tried and depressed, and well-nigh crushed, let us go on in mind to "the hope"; and when the question arises, in the midst of our work, as it often will do, What is it all for? why all this toiling? oh, let us remember it will all be found by-and-by, in the great treasurehouse above. All that is done for Jesus is reckoning up: every cup of cold water given in His name shall have its reward; every sentence spoken to a dying sinner for His sake who redeemed him, will be found after many days: every class instructed in His power will be owned by Jesus in that glorious day. "He that soweth bountifully shall reap bountifully." That is our account-book -not here, but by-and-by: that is God's measurement of service; and I do rejoice to see His children going right on in the Master's work, without minding what is

said of them. It will be said, I know, that we go a great deal too far: that we are slaving ourselves to death, that we shall kill ourselves, or else injure our health. Yes, we shall be thought extraordinary, very probably, by our relations, prejudiced, narrow-minded, bigoted; but it is all worth while: we are working for Him who did not think it too much to give His life for us, and we are working for the "hope laid up for us in heaven." Oh, let us be willing to be counted fools for Christ's sake, remembering each seed of corn we sow will have its corresponding ear in God's great harvest-field. Truly, His service pays down here, if the sunshine of His presence is worth having, if the whispering of His Spirit is joy; but of what the future will be we can only say, "The hope which is laid up for you in heaven."

May God give us grace to look on through all the fogs and mists that interrupt and hinder us, through all the complications of man's opinions, with the eye of faith right on to the end—"the hope set before us!"



The Young Momen's Bible Class.

Prov. ii. 1-9.

" My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee:

" So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding:

"Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding:

" If thou ecclest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures:

"Then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God.

" For the Lord giveth wisdom: out of His mouth cometh knowledge and understanding.

"He layeth up sound wiedom for the righteous: He is a buckler to them that walk uprightly.

" He bespeth the paths of judgment, and preserveth the way of His saints.

"Then shalt thou understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity; yea, every good path."

Do not these few verses show us God's way to enable us to attain to holiness of walk? Many people say, "I should like to live, to believe, to walk as a follower of Jesus." Now, I think, if you are really in earnest, if you are really wishing to do the right thing, these verses will help you. The devil is always trying to give you distorted views of God's truth; when once a person begins to be in earnest, he tries to twist the truth of God, to put one piece forward and to hide another. The way to learn God's truth is to take the

whole of it, not to say, "This piece I will study, this piece I like." If you do, you will be sure to get a distorted view of truth, and if you only see a part, you cannot judge of the whole. Sometimes we hear people say, "If the blood of Jesus has put away my sin, if I am washed and saved by Him, then that is all; there is nothing left for me to do." Now, in what sense is it true that all is done, and yet that something remains for us to do? Look at St. John xix. 30: "When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar. He said, It is finished: and He bowed His head, and gave up the ghost." And in St. John xiv. 15, we read, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." When the Lord Jesus Christ saves a soul, He puts the law of love into that soul, and it becomes the living power in him for obedience. Psalm xl. 2: "He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings." When once we have this law of love in our hearts, we shall be anxious to study the commandments of God, and to find out to the smallest particular what His divine will is concerning us.

He teaches us what that will is in two ways—by His Word, and by the example of Jesus. Children learn frequently the most by seeing pictures, and this is just the way in which God has taught us. He gives us His written commandments, and the living Example, the picture or pattern of Jesus Christ; and, to enable us to follow those commandments, He gives us the

power of the Spirit. Thus the child of God, under the Father's teaching, every day yielding himself up to that teaching, has the law of love in three places—in the Word of God, in the living example of Jesus Christ, and by the Spirit of the living God in that new heart which God has given him.

This passage seems a beautiful summing up of two things; first, God's work in the heart of His people, and, secondly, His people in earnest to walk in His commandments. We come to it as learners (verse 1): "My son, if thou wilt receive my words." To be in the state of receivers is most important. If you hold out your hand to take a thing, what must that hand be? Many have their hands full of the world, of their own thoughts, and of their own plans. If a sack is filled up with chaff, there will be no room for the wheat. Ask yourselves the question, "Have I the empty vessel, or the hand brimful?" remembering that all opportunities of receiving that are wasted will rise up in the judgment-day against you.

There are a great many IFS in this portion of Scripture. The first is, "If thou wilt receive my words"—not a pleasant interesting idea, not some new thought, but God's words.

The next is, "If thou wilt hide my commandments." Many go to a certain extent: "they receive," but they forget to "hide." Look at Job xxii. 22: "Receive, I pray thee, the law from His mouth, and lay up His words in thine heart." In the mother of Jesus we have

an example of this hiding (St. Luke ii. 51): "But His mother kept all these sayings in her heart." God's word, thus hidden, is ready at the moment of temptation. We cannot always go and look for our Bibles. In the thick of this world's bustle, the devil comes with some terrible snare, and, like a soldier suddenly thrust at by the enemy, he would be sadly off who had to run about and look for his sword. If we want to defeat the devil. we must thus be ready to thrust at him with the sword of the Spirit: for nothing else has any effect, from that he flees. Can you not look back and remember the time when you fell, because you were not ready, the sword not at hand, and you had no time to look for it? the enemy thrust hard at you, and you fell. You may say, with David (Psalm xxx. 7): "Lord, by Thy favour Thou hast made my mountain to stand strong: Thou didst hide Thy face, and I was troubled."

Whenever people tell me they think they shall not go wrong because they feel so strong, I am always afraid for them. Feeling is a very poor weapon to depend upon; but if I hear them say, "I know such and such a word is written in the Book of God, I cannot go against that word," then I hope they will be kept, if, with that, there is just the lifting up of the eye, "Lord, help me."

"The next "if" is, "If thou wilt incline thine ear." Many people who have received the word of God have not inclined their ear. There is a great deal of noise in the world, a great deal that prevents our hearing if

we go carelessly through life. There is much done in this world which seems as if it had nothing to do with God; but, if you are inclining your ear, God can speak to you in your work. It is a happy thing to hear God speak to us from morning till night: but there must be a hush, a hush of other sounds, or you will not hear God's voice. It will not do for you to let the world make as much noise as possible, and yet expect to hear the "still small voice." Perhaps, in the morning, you say to yourself, "I want to walk with God," and vet all day long you are encouraging other sounds, making worldly acquaintances, and spending your time in the way most likely to drown the voice of God. Look at Ecclesiastes ix. 17: "The words of wise men" (perhaps, wisdom) "are heard in quiet," not in the din of noise. I say to every dear young friend who has ever such a little desire to listen, You will never hear God's voice profitably, nor learn God's will, day by day, unless you keep your soul in quiet, and anxious to avoid anything that can disturb it. I have no confidence in the truthfulness of people saying they wish to be taught, when they are doing voluntarily the very thing which hinders it. Read Nehemiah vi. 3: "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you?" Nothing God gives you to do need ever interfere with this listening; your duties will not. Sometimes you say. "If I were not a servant! if I were not in a house of business! if I had not so many relations!" but all these

things are of God's appointment, given you by Him, and they will never hinder you. But it is the thing which you choose for yourself that interferes: for instance, God did not give you foolish light companions: He places you in the world, but He tells you you are to walk as His children in the midst of it. To you He says, "Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient" (Eph. v. 4). And again, "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying" (Eph. iv. 29). Nothing prevents God's voice from being heard by us more than indulging in frivolous conversation. Oh, to have the quiet mind, pondering upon the doings of our God! and it is quite possible to keep up communion with Him in the midst of the clatter and the din of the world.

The next "if" is, "If thou wilt apply thine heart to understanding." It seems as if the desire strengthened as we go on, every day finding us more anxious. First we "receive the word," then we "incline the ear," then we "apply the heart." How opposite all this is to laziness of soul! People often say, "I wish I could find the Lord." They tell me they have been "months and years seeking Him;" but I think they cannot have sought God as this word tells us to do. Read verses 3—5: "Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the

knowledge of God." There is the promise of the living God: lend your whole soul and purpose to this one thing, and you will not be disappointed. Let us read on, verses 6-9: "For the Lord giveth wisdom: out of His mouth cometh knowledge and understanding. He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous: He is a buckler to them that walk uprightly. He keepeth the paths of judgment, and preserveth the way of His saints. Then shalt thou understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity; yea, every good path." Thus we see the strength, wisdom, power, and grace of God are never promised to the indolent and slothful. The seeking soul will find, the diligent soul will be satisfied. the longing soul will get its desire fully accomplished: for the promise is, "If thou wilt apply thine heart, then shalt thou understand." "The Lord giveth wisdom"; yet you must search for it. I think it is because we separate these things that we are continually disappointed and always making blunders. It is in this way people make such confusion with the doctrines of grace. You will sometimes hear election dwelt upon, on the one hand, as if a man had nothing to do, and perhaps when we have seen the danger of this perversion, we are told. on the other hand, that if a man will only work he will succeed, quite forgetting that it is "not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord." We may say it is hard to understand; so it is, if we try to explain what God has not revealed. "Secret things belong" only "to God." If we are saved, it is by the mighty

grace of God, and through that we can do all things. How these two things—that the Lord giveth wisdom and vet we must search for it—are to be clearly joined together will never be perfectly revealed till we get to the kingdom. In Isaiah xxviii. 24-26, we read: "Doth the plowman plow all day to sow? doth he open and break the clods of his ground? When he hath made plain the face thereof, doth he not cast abroad the fitches, and scatter the cummin, and cast in the principal wheat and the appointed barley and the rye in their place? For his God doth instruct him to discretion, and doth teach him." I never yet knew the farmer who said he would not sow the corn because it is God's work. not his, to make the seed grow. God gives us our work to do, and unless it is done we cannot possibly succeed: but God must give all the grace and all the blessing, or nothing we can do will have any effect. Let us learn, then, from this passage, "to hear, to seek, and to incline our ear," remembering God looks for an undivided heart, ready to give up everything, and to follow Him fully. Many people like to hear good sermons, and Bible Classes, and interesting teaching, but wish to have other things besides. They will take part in religious enjoyment, but they want to hear the world's voice as well as God's-to see the world's pretty things as well as God's sights; and thus they run the race with weights about their feet. Let us remember that verse in St. Luke (x. 42): "One thing is needful." When Mary

was brought to that state of mind, the voice of her Beloved entered her soul, and she heard Him talking to her. She was listening intently; she had deliberately chosen the one thing—the one thing only. Mary received, listened, and searched diligently, and she found the knowledge of God; for when she brought the alabaster box of ointment, we read, "She did it for my burial."

These two things are very closely connected. She sat at the feet of Jesus, and therefore she knew more about what was coming than other people did. She had been inclining her ear, listening in the stillness of her own soul; and, whether by observation, or by noticing words other people had forgotten, or by comparing what she heard with events as they passed on, I do not know, but one thing is certain, she found wisdom. I am quite sure, if we were more in the habit of listening for God's voice in the quiet recesses of our own souls, getting rid of those hindering things which we encourage, we should know very much more than we do. Our ignorance is greatly our own fault.





The following are the Classes from which the Notes are taken:-

THE MOTHERS' MEETING,

St. Jude's Lecture Hall, Mildmay Road.

THE YOUNG WOMEN'S BIBLE CLASS,

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THE Broad Street Ward School, 59, London Wall, E.C.

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NOTES



By C. P.

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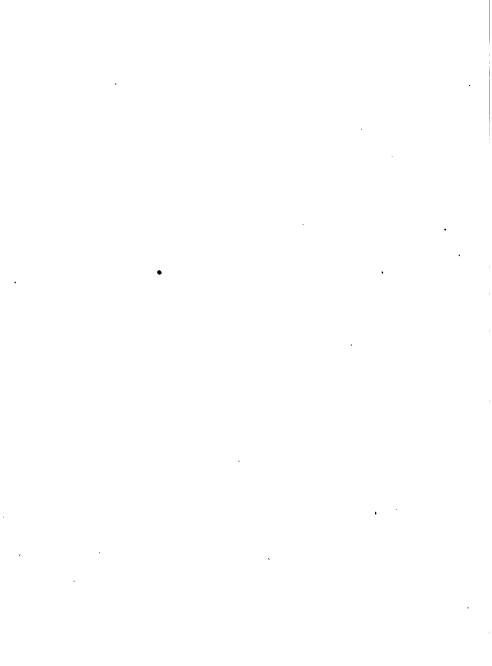
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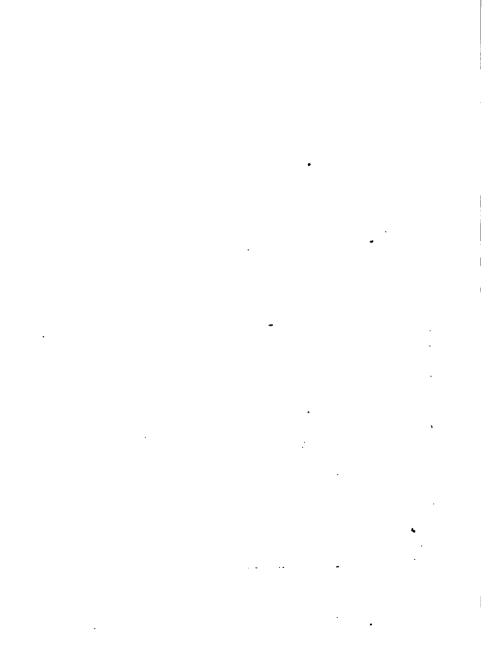
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The Jemule Workers' Class.

Cor. i. 6.

"Which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth."

SHALL we take up as our first point, this evening, the thought of the apostle in this passage, fruitbearing—"Bringeth forth fruit as it doth also in you;" and again, it is repeated, verse 10, "being fruitful in every good word and work." That same gospel, he seems to say, which has been brought to you, has had a wider circuit. It has gone forth with its mighty message of love into all the world.

It was one of the marvels of grace—may we not say one of the miracles of grace,—that a few unlettered fishermen should carry that gospel forth in the face of opposition, and ignorance, and prejudice; and that in a few years we should hear it said—"Is come unto you, as it is in all the world." "If God be for us, who can be against us?"—And what then? "It bringeth forth fruit in them as in you;" not perhaps, not possibly, not sometimes, but positively, and invariably, and continuously, it "bringeth forth fruit."

This sixth verse is, surely, very important. We see St. Paul makes *fruit* to be the invariable consequence of the Word having been received; he simplifies a thing about which we make great difficulties. We say, how can we know when people are really converted, or who are truly and sincerely the children of God? He answers our question by giving us one infallible test, from which there is no escape: they must, they do bring forth fruit.

Now, let me give one word of caution upon a subject of great importance. We hear it said-"So-and-so was brought to God yesterday;" "so many persons were converted last night;" or, "on such or such a day many were saved." How can we be sure of this when the only test is fruit bearing? Can we be justified in making these assertions, in taking as evidence of conversion some strong feeling, some lively emotion, or some apparent sorrow or conviction of sin? We may see much which looks like the work of conversion. It may prove to be such—thank God it often does; but till it has been tested we have no right to say positively that that soul is converted. Let us call it awakening or impression if we will, but do not let us misuse words. I believe it does great harm in the Church of God, for we find that the necessary consequence of mistakes on this point is an error, which grievously dishonours God and stumbles believers.

People tell you, "So-and-so was converted three years ago;" and then we find that person in the world again, and to account for this it is said, "he has fallen from grace." And thus one of God's attributes is impugned. "Faithful is He that has called you." Does

Scripture ever once warrant our believing that when God has begun a work He will give it up an imperfect and unfinished thing? Can it ever be said of the great Master Builder, "He began to build and was not able to finish?" Yet this is the error into which people are apt to fall who make these hasty assertions. Nav. may I not say that it is presumption for man to pass judgment on that which God only knows? Let us tread softly. Judgment and separation is not our work. The moment we begin to say this one is converted and that one is not, we shall make mistakes on either hand. We can only look at the outward appearance, and it is a solemn thought that many of those who now fill up the ranks of the professing Church will be found wanting in that day when the Master holds the balance of the sanctuary in His own hand. Oh for this abounding fruitfulness which leaves no room to doubt the grace received!

The immediate change implied in the close of the 6th verse is very beautiful: "Since the day ye heard of it." It is as if the apostle said—"From that day the barren tree began to bear fruit, the dry branches burst forth in their little leaf-buds,—leaves, flowers, and fruit, each in its season, followed. The fruit germinated, and then, with the dew of heaven falling and the sunshine streaming on it, it ripened and ripened till it was ready for the Master's use."

The subject of fruitfulness is all important; and though, perhaps, it seems to culminate in the 15th

chapter of St. John, it is to be found in many other passages, in both the Old and New Testament.

First, let us consider the sources of fruitfulness. Secondly, the object of fruitfulness.

Look at Psalm i. We see there, when the Word of God is the deep and constant study of our lives, it is a source of fruitfulness. Verse 2: "But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in His law doth he meditate day and night." Then again we read, verse 3: "He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season." Here we notice it is seasonable fruit which appears: that is, it is just the kind and the measure of fruit that the Master seeks, and has a right to expect, and it shows itself in the very season He comes to seek it. The barren fig-tree was just the opposite of this! The Lord sought figs on it, and they should have been there, for the time of the fig gathering was not past; but He looked among those broad leaves and found none. They would have been there if it had been bringing forth fruit in its season.

Of how many amongst us is this a picture? Are we bringing forth fruit according to our privileges, and according to the time God has been dealing with us?

Fruit should be more ripe and mellow in those who for years have been under the teaching and discipline of God, than it is in the babe. If one who has long known the truth, long been in the school of Christ, and who ought to be an experienced Christian, shows the same faults as

a young beginner, that one is not bringing forth fruit in its season. From the moment the Word of God comes into the heart of a Christian the fruit begins to set, but it takes many a ray from the sun, many a sparkling gem of heaven-sent dew, many a drop of living water to flow from the roots, and rise from the stem into the branches, before the fruit is fully ripe. But what if the Husbandman comes to seek fruit, and finds not only small unripe fruit, but hard, withered, blasted fruit, on a tree which for many a year has been planted by the waters and tended with the greatest care? This reminds us of the expression in Hebrews v. 12: "For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God." Those little words, "When for the time," convey a great lesson for us; they have evidently something to do with "the fruit in its season." God reckons up the time we have been in His school, and He says: "You ought now to be teachers. Am I to find the sins of young beginners in you, - the same hasty words slipping out, the same unguardedness of manner and conversation, and want of discipline and control over yourselves?" Oh! let us remember that for every moment we are in God's school, and under His teaching, we must give an account to Him, and that He expects us to be growing more fit for His service, more meet for the Master's use! And if one of the sources of fruitfulness is meditation, or study of the Word of God, the fruit of the experienced Christian, who has had

years of such study, should be more mellow and matured in consequence.

Again, in Jeremiah xvii. 7, 8, we have another source of fruitfulness: "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river." And who is this well-watered tree? The soul that, in simple child-like faith, expects great things from a faithful God, implicitly trusts Him: hangs on Him continually in the deep consciousness of its own great weakness and of His unbounded strength. It is just "hoping in His mercy," clinging to His arm with all our weight, that makes us fruitful. Sometimes people get discouraged at hearing about fruitfulness, but I do not think there is anything disheartening about it, when the unfailing sources are thus opened out to us. If it were not so, we might truly all go away with our heads bowed down like bulrushes. But when we read that it is simply trusting in the Lord, that it is all out of ourselves, why need we fear? There is no limit to the strength of the Mighty One: there is no drying up of the life-giving waters. Let us cling to Him in all our felt weakness, and there is not one of us who will not be fruitful.

Thus, then, we have two sources of fruitfulness—the study of the Word, and trust in the Lord. A third, and most important source, is abiding in Jesus.

Abiding in Jesus, involves union with Him as the necessity of life; or rather life involves the necessity of

union. The sinner has gone to the foot of the cross, and by faith beheld Jesus as His Saviour; but that is not all. It is hard to explain this union, except in metaphor, or by the figures our Lord Himself uses. It is remaining in Jesus, as the limb remains in the body, as the branch remains in the vine. Abiding implies that the whole being—the mind, the thoughts, the eye, the hand, all are bound up with Jesus; that we are in Him and He in us; that we have no independent being; that His life, received by us, must needs flow forth from us; and this is fruit-bearing. But let us remember what a little thing in the natural branch may stop the inflowing of the sap. I think the Lord Jesus would teach us this by reiterating the command, "Abide in Me." As if He would tell us what a delicate thing is this current of life, how easily anything may check or hinder the flow. It is like the electric spark on the telegraphic wire, or the radiating heat through the glowing metal; check the communication, and all stands still. To make this plain, you know what it is to interpose a check or non-conducting medium in the handle of a metal vessel,—pour hot water into such a vessel, and the heat pervades the whole thing,—but insert a piece of ivory or wood, or any foreign material, and you have stayed the current. Sin often acts in this way. Some bad habit, some carelessness of walk, some worldly conformity, acts like a check upon the flow of sap through the branches; once touch that and you stop the fruit bearing. It will no longer be real, it will all be

imitation work—mock-fruit, as it were, fastened on from outside, mere externalism. Oh! we want this living power which pushes out the fruit, for when the sap comes up strong and full, it must find its outflow as it had its inflow. The fruit is the sap in manifestation. It is not our fruit, but *His*; and as His life flows through us, the rich clusters of grapes, meet for the Divine Husbandman, hang on our branches.

But, again, we must remember work is not always fruit, and fruit is not always work.

It is well to be hard-working Christians, if the hard work is the result of the flowing of the sap; but there is fruit to be manifested, which is not work. Do we not often see the fruits of the Spirit in those who are in great weariness, sickness, or poverty? Can we not often learn a lesson from the quiet submission or the patient bearing of overwhelming care? Perhaps there is no fruit that brings so much glory to God as a cheerfulness of spirit in deep trial and under the pressure of painful circumstances. A Christian who can afford to be joyous in the midst of a troublous world, or with the clouds of sorrow mantling over his house, is filled by a power not of earth; and such a one is abiding in Christ. If it were possible for us to separate between fruit and work, I think we should throw on one side a great deal of hard work; indeed, half the activities we see around Much comes from a certain restlessness of disposition, much from the power of imitation, much from philanthropy; but all this is not fruit. It may be that not more than a fraction of our work, if really tested and weighed, would be found to be fruit unto God; and all that deserves that name springs from an abiding conscious communion with a risen Saviour, and is a drawing from His grace and life. All such work is the outflowing from Himself; we are simply the channels for that outflowing again. No work is fruit but what is done for Jesus. Those of us who are teachers, let us say, "I will speak to these children because my Father has entrusted me with His messages." Or, if we are district visitors, let us say, "I will go to these sick ones because my Father has lent them to me to be ministered unto."

Another word on the abiding in Jesus. There is a great difference in the working power of a Christian who is so abiding, and one who knows nothing or little of it day by day. Many will kneel down to pray before setting forth to their work, to take some class, or speak to some sinner, and, no doubt, they will receive some measure of blessing; but they do not get the full blessing those do who are abiding continually in Jesus, who come out, as it were, from His presence chamber. The secret place of the Almighty is their home, and they find little difficulty in speaking of Him with whom they dwell; they talk in their own language, and not in a foreign tongue. We may say of them, they live in Christ and Christ in them, and they bring forth much fruit.

Secondly, the object of fruitfulness. What is the

object of a Christian's work? We know what are the objects that prompt the worldling's work-to get a good name, to be considered philanthropic, or thought to be very active and useful; or, it may be, a certain benevolence of disposition which needs an outlet. But it is not so with the Christian; his aim is not even to enjoy work for its own sake, but that it may be for the honour of Jesus. You will remember how the bride in the Song of Solomon says, "Awake, O north wind, and come thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits"-Canticles iv. 16. And the beloved comes into his garden for fragrance and for fruit. The Church of God is the Bridegroom's chosen garden, the vineyard of Jesus, in which He walks and eats His pleasant fruits. The same thought is again found in Canticles vii. 14: "At our gates are all manner of pleasant fruits, new and old, which I have laid up for thee, O my beloved." All for thee and thee alone.

The Church of God bears all sorts of fruit. We see the ardent joyousness and strong impulse of the young Christian, and we see the ripe, mellowed fruit of the tried and tempted believer. But all are accepted, all are rejoiced in by the Master, and not one branch in the living vine will be despised if it is bringing forth fruit in its season. Look at Isaiah lxi. 3: "That they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He might be glorified." Here is our object.

There are many such verses in the prophets which speak of fruit being borne to the glory of God. There is a very beautiful one in St. John xv. 8: "Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be My disciples." It is as if the Lord said: "Do not be satisfied with only a little fruit, though I acknowledge it if it is real, but I want much." Then there is a touch of beauty we have not perhaps observed. He seems to say: "I love My Father, and I want Him glorified. Nothing will bring you so near to Me, or give such pleasure to Me, as your honouring My Father. You shall be My disciples if you bring forth much fruit to His praise." Do we not feel thus about any beloved one on earth? They who give pleasure to that one are drawn very near to our hearts. Again, for our object in bearing fruit, look at Philippians i. 11: "Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the praise and glory of God."

And now shall we inquire what are the fruits to be thus manifested? Scripture is very explicit in all its teaching; it deals with detail. Galatians v. 22, 23: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance."

Love stands at the head. We cannot dwell upon each one now at any length, but let us apply them to our own consciences. None of us can surely say that our circumstances prevent us from exhibiting love, joy, and peace; from displaying gentleness, meekness, and patience! Are these the fruits the world sees in us?

Man can only see the outward manifestation; our Lord alone knows the inner life of His children. When we look at a tree, it is not the sap that is visible, but the result of it. So it is with our spiritual life: that secret spring lies hid between ourselves and God. Our life before and with God may be deep and true, but we do not expect the world to know about that hidden thing. Perhaps the less it is talked of under some circumstances the better-rather let the abounding fruit tell of its existence. We hear much about sound doctrine and deep teaching; but what are all the beautiful theories of holiness except as they tell practically and evidently, in our daily, hourly walk? The world is very keen-sighted, ever watching us. observing how we bear disappointment, how we meet sorrow, how we endure provocation. The world knows nothing about our spiritual experience, but it knows full well what our conduct ought to be. What if a word puts us out of temper, if a little change of plans ruffles our equanimity, if the crossing of our will makes us passionate or sullen? Shall the world see the tear in our eye and the flush on our cheek because our pride is wounded or our wishes thwarted? Are these things befitting those who have been brought into the school of Christ, and should therefore keep themselves under discipline and control. Oh, let us never forget Whose name we bear and Whose honour is at stake as the world looks on and sees how we live.

"Love, joy, longsuffering." Do we break down here?

We can suffer, perhaps, for a little while; but when it lasts long, when people are unreasonable and trying, when they wear us out with their ingratitude and perverseness, no wonder we are impatient and irritable! and yet "charity suffereth long."

"Gentleness." Is there not a great want of this amongst Christians? Do we not often hear very hasty inconsiderate remarks, very sharp words, and uncourteous expressions?

"Faith." Perhaps this may mean faithfulness. There is a lack of this also in the Church of God. Shall we say that this extends to punctuality, in keeping engagements? Let promises be sacred; let not classes wait in vain for teachers, or teachers for classes; let us be dependable."

"Meekness." What about this? Do we not feel guilty here, perhaps more than anywhere? Can we bear rebuke, reproach, or even severity and unreasonableness quietly? I remember a remark made by the clergyman of a parish, who was in particularly trying, uncomfortable circumstances. A friend said to him, "This is provoking: what will you do?" He replied, "First take care that I am not provoked." "Charity is not easily provoked," not soon angry, and it is when things are most provoking that we want to see the ripe fruit of the curbed temper, and the chastened tongue.

"Temperance." This refers to everything in daily life. It is, as it were, saying, "we are to keep the check-string upon ourselves in all things." One reason,

perhaps, why all these graces are so little apparent in us, is, because we forget the next verse: "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts," Gal. v. 24. Will the fruit grow side by side with the out-growth of the flesh: will it flourish among thorns? No; it must needs become stunted if the soil of the heart is occupied with weeds. Scripture is constantly teaching us this truth. It tells us to run the race, but to lay aside the weights: to put on the new man, but to put off the old: "to set our affections on things above;" but, "to mortify the members which are upon the earth." Oh, is there that dying daily that God longs to see in His children?

Do we not desire to be better workers in God's great harvest field? Let us pray more earnestly for deeper spiritual life, that our work may be the result of the overflowings of the Spirit; that we may bring forth fruit to His praise. We want His grace, to glorify Him in our private life, in our home circle; and then, far and wide as He gives us opportunity. If we have been planted by the waters, and if we spread out our roots to receive and drink in those waters, we shall never cease from yielding fruit: for in proportion as we receive life from Him, He will certainly receive fruit from us, and that, too, in the season when He comes to seek it.



The Houng Momen's Bible Class.

PROVERBS ii. 9-22.

"Then shalt thou understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity; yea, every good path.

"When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is

pleasant unto thy soul.

- "Discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee:
- "To deliver thee from the way of the evil man, from the man that speaketh froward things;
 - "Who leave the paths of uprightness, to walk in the ways of

darkness;

- "Who rejoice to do evil, and delight in the frowardness of the wicked;
 - " Whose ways are crooked, and they froward in their paths:
- "To deliver thee from the strange woman, even from the stranger which flattereth with her words;
- "Which foreaketh the guide of her youth, and forgetteth the covenant of her God.
- "For her house inclineth unto death, and her paths unto the dead.
- "None that go unto her return again, neither take they hold of the paths of life.
- "That thou mayest walk in the way of good men, and keep the paths of the righteous.
- "For the upright shall dwell in the land, and the perfect shall remain in it.
- "But the wicked shall be cut off from the earth, and the transgressors shall be rooted out of it."

WE saw in the former part of this chapter what was expected from those who were really desiring wisdom. They receive, and hide the word; they incline the ear, and apply the heart to understanding. It seems,

as it were, a following on, a getting more and more in earnest. The Lord looks for all this in those who sincerely wish to serve Him. Let us ask, why is this earnestness always successful?

The ninth and tenth verses give us the answer. God has all we seek ready for us: "Then shalt thou understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity; yea, every good path. When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul." We are brought up to this point: if we have earnestly sought these things, we have surely found out and proved that God is a faithful God. We have received all that we sought for as a free gift already laid up for us; and then comes a train of consequences resulting from that state of mind described in the tenth verse, and that state of mind following upon the gift of the sixth verse: "The Lord giveth wisdom." Before we go on to see these consequences, let each of us ask-Is this my state? has wisdom entered into my heart? The devil does not mind how much abstract truth you understand provided you do not ask yourselves how it affects you personally. Do we stand in the position described in this tenth verse? You may say, God knows; so He does, but still He would have us examine ourselves faithfully and solemnly as in His presence. Did you ever try to do this? Did you ever ask Him to search you? People speak much to one another, but little to God. Go to God, and tell Him what you find you are: lay bare your heart before Him: spend your spare moments with Him instead of

filling them up with unprofitable talk. Do you remember the words of the hymn?—

"Were half the breath thus vainly spent
To Heaven in supplication sent,
My cheerful song would oftener be—
'Hear what the Lord hath done for me.'"

"When wisdom entereth into thine heart." Do vou recollect any other scripture about wisdom not remaining on the surface, but entering into the soul? Ps. cxix. 130. "The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple." Now, I would say, dear young friends, that all of you in this room are divided into two classes, either you belong to those into whose heart wisdom has entered, or else it is still with you a mere surface thing. There are some here, I trust, who have been brought to know the Lord. You can remember when that which had been all on the outside entered into your soul; as a poor woman once expressed it-"When you used to read and talk to me, it seemed to me as if all the while there was a band of iron about my heart; but on such a day, when you were reading such a portion of the Word of God, the band seemed to break and the lesson entered in."

Do you remember a scripture illustration of this? Acts xvi. 14, "And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul." That opened heart, how we want it! God's word is a

life-giving word, if it once gets an entrance: "When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul." Before that memorable day you knew religion to be a good thing; but yet you secretly thought it a very dull and gloomy thing—not the least pleasant, not a bit of heart-joy in it; but when it entered in, and you began to feed upon it, was it not pleasant then?

Now, look at the consequences of this entering in. In verses 11, 12, and 16—"When wisdom entereth into thine heart," &c., &c. But then we read in verse 8, the Lord Himself "preserveth the way of His saints"; and here, in verse 11, we are told, "Discretion shall preserve thee."

How do you reconcile these two statements? When God keeps His people, He always keeps them in the way of discretion and in the paths of holiness. "He keepeth the feet of His saints," but He does not let them tread in any path of their own choosing. He never keeps His saints' feet except in that straight and narrow way that leadeth unto life. Now, how are you to be kept? All your own wisdom will not do it: "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool." When you go to God and ask Him to hold your right hand—when you grasp the blessed promises of His own word—when you cling to the arm of the Mighty One, He will give you sound wisdom and discretion. See Luke i. 79:—"To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."

That is the purpose of God: He does not keep our feet any where else. People ask me sometimes whether, if they die committing sin, God will keep them because they were once converted? Again I say, God only keeps His saints in His own paths. Out of the king's highway, you have no claim to one of His promises. If God keeps you, it will be in the paths of discretion. The preserving of the 8th verse is the preserving of the 11th. It is the hand of the living God that keeps the life beating in your veins, but for all that you would not leave off taking food and starve yourself, because God could keep you.

A few words on this subject of discretion as we generally understand it. People talk of indiscretion as if it were a misfortune: a misfortune to sin ! Dear young friends, folly is sin, when God has promised to teach us wisdom: want of discretion is sin, when God has promised to give us discretion. Indiscreet conduct is sin. Let us beware how we tamper with folly. To make light of sin is one of Satan's snares. Proverbs xiv. 9: "Fools make a mock at sin." There is not, I think, a more important talent put into a woman's hand than God has thrown the shield of His prodiscretion. tection around woman in giving her this talent: let her beware how she casts it aside. Why do we hear such terrible tales of sin and misery among our women? Because they have forgotten that the thought of foolishness is sin, and that the scriptural description of godly women is "discreet, chaste, keepers at home."

Now, see what will be the consequences of this preserving. There are three things mentioned: "To deliver thee from the way of the evil man," "from the strange woman," and to lead thee "in the way of good men." Scripture is never purely negative: it is both negative and positive. It tells us what we are to do, as well as what we are not to; what we are delivered from, and what we are brought into. We often separate these two things. If we leave off evil ways without putting on good ones, it is like emptying a sack of chaff and putting no wheat in; it is like a swept house unoccupied. People sav. "Oh. I know I've got into such and such a bad habit; I must leave it off:" but unless you "learn to do good" as well as "cease to do evil," the devil will soon draw you back again. If you give up your unsanctified pleasures you must have other joys. Every heart must be filled: it must have an object. In the soul of man, as in the natural world, there can be no vacuum. If God takes away what is sinful, He puts in its place His own blessed service-His own holy joy. Some people make another mistake: they put on without putting off. If you try to learn God's ways and yet go on in your own at the same time. it will be an entire failure. 1 Peter ii. 1: "Wherefore. laying aside all malice, and all guile," &c.; and, Hebrews xii. 1: "Let us lay aside every weight." You must lay aside weights before you can run: you must empty your hand before you can fill it. Do you remember any instance in scripture of this kind?

Genesis xxxv. 2: "Put away the strange gods that are among von." It is of no use to build an altar to God whilst you are bowing at the altar of the devil. Gideon was another striking instance of this. Judges vi. 25: "Throw down the altar of Baal that thy father hath, and cut down the grove that is by it." God had promised Gideon great blessings, but before he obtained them there was something for him to do. command came as well as God's promise. Though Gideon had had the promise he was not to go forth till he had obeyed the command. He must put off and put on (Ephesians iv. 22, 24): "That ye put off the old man," and "that ye put on the new man." That is exactly what we find here in Proverbs ii.—keeping from the evil and keeping in the paths of good men. There is no half-way house between the two. When the Son of Man looks out upon the assembled millions as they stand before Him in the judgment-day, and divides the sheep from the goats, as they go away so must they remain for ever—no bridge between them. Separated then in virtue of their separation now—no middle place then, no middle place now. If you are not in the family of Jesus, where are you? There is no alternative. If you are not walking as the children of God, you must be walking as the children of the devil. If you are delivered from the way of evil men, you will surely be walking in the way of good men.

What would strike your minds as another very important lesson to be learnt from this passage? The

importance of companionship—the evil of forming bad friendships. Depend upon it, we dare not trifle with companionship. What an important place God gives to it in these verses! We should not like to poison our bodies, and vet we are often willing to risk our soul's health by venturing into paths of danger; and what path more perilous than a worldly intimacy! If you are walking in the way of discretion, it will not be in that of evil men and evil women. It is one of Satan's commonest snares to get you entrapped in what looks like friendship and affection, and ends in ruin to soul and body—ruin for this life as well as for the next. Oh, compare the portion God gives you with that the devil offers! The thorny ways of sin are often strewed with the gayest flowers; the fairest temptations come in the form of pleasant companionship. If you find you have made an acquaintance likely to injure your soul's health, just go to God about it: do not parley with the tempter: do not trifle with the danger. Habits of sin do not get formed all at once. The first time you hear the sinful word, the impure joke, you blush; next time you can bear it better, and ere long you become used to it. Again, I say, tamper not with temptation: cut off the right hand, pluck out the right eye, and do it at once. Delay has ruined many souls. "I do not know that it is very prudent," people say; "I will wait and see." It may be you will see by the light of the flames of hell, and oh, what a sight that will be! Look at chap. iv. 15: "Avoid it." Take that as your motto. Be

not like Eve, who first looked, then tasted, and, lastly, est the forbidden thing. Never mind the sneer or the laugh; they are but little things after all to put up with, and you may depend upon it that thousands of souls now in hell trace their fall—their first false step—to evil companionship. It is remarkable in this chapter, that the evil man and the evil woman are both spoken of in one character—as backsliders. There may be a good deal of evil companionship with those who never were in the right way, but these had been there; they "Leave the paths of uprightness," "forsake the guide of their youth." They have been instructed; they do know the difference between light and darkness. They have been taught, perhaps, at a mother's knee; and I think it is implied here that these are the most dangerous of all companions. That is a deeply solemn word in chap. ix. 18: "Are in the depths of hell." How few that first begin tampering with sin have any thought of going into the depths of hell: "The narrow way alone leadeth unto life." Every soul is entering into one way or the other; in which are you?



The Jemale Morkers' Sible Cluss, FRIARS' MOUNT, BETHNAL GREEN.

St. Matt. ix. 86-88.

"But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.

"Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous,

but the labourers are few;

"Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest."

THE first thought that strikes us in this passage is the fact, that our blessed Lord lived and laboured in the very same world, and with the same sins, trials, and disappointments surrounding Him as He calls His people to encounter now. He went in and out amid a wayward and distressed people. He made Himself a fellow-labourer with His children, and is acquainted, by personal experience, with every sorrow, every anxious thought, every trial connected with the work we have to do with now.

Here we read of Him going about all the cities and villages, teaching in the synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and visiting the sick and the sorrowful.

And may not the thought, "My Master has passed through all the complications and difficulties of work before me," be a great stay and comfort to His poor labourers? And shall they not remember, there is no time or circumstance in which they may not find His sympathy?

It is just as if we could see a track left behind in the snow, the footsteps of one who had gone on before, and as we carefully trace it we place our foot in each foot-mark and know we can venture in safety. But I think if we are to be looking for the footsteps of our Divine Master, that we may walk in His ways, we must cultivate a waiting, unhasting state of mind, and seek such a quietness and calmness of spirit as can only be obtained by continual communion with the Lord. There are many simple and yet beautiful touches in this little story, and many lessons we may gather from it.

"But when He saw the multitude, He was Verse 36. moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd." Jesus allows the Evangelist to speak of Him here as if He were simply human, just as if the sight of the teeming throng of needy souls had the same effect upon His spirit as it has upon ours, because He would make us feel, in every sense, that we are brethren,—that He is "bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh." He speaks of having looked at those multitudes of unshepherded souls till His holy eyes filled with tears and His heart with compassion. But what is implied in the fact that the heart of Jesus mourned over souls because they had no shepherd? He would teach us that though He is the Great Shepherd, yet that truth is not to supersede the need of earthly shepherds to watch over the flock. As the Christian Church sees the masses around, He would not have us only look up and say, "they have got a Heavenly Shepherd," but He would have us look down and ask, "Why are these souls forgotten? Is it that we have neglected them? Is not the Chief Shepherd calling upon us to search after the wanderers?" Ah! the Lord of Glory notices and reckons up how many sheep are left unshepherded.

Verse 37. "Then saith He unto His disciples, the harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few."

Is there not something very beautiful in the way the Lord condescends to bring His disciples into sympathy with Himself about His great work?

We might have thought He would never have stooped to this companionship, that He must have walked alone in the silence of His own greatness. But though it is true no experience could ever meet His, no human soul ever comprehend the secrets of His soul, yet in His wondrous love He comes down to the level of His disciples, and takes them into counsel with Himself, as if He said to them: "I have compassion on the multitudes, and I want you to talk with Me about it, and advise with Me as to what is to be done." He might by one word have fed and provided for them all; but that is not His way, He calls His disciples and says: "Here they all are around us, how shall we deal with them?"

Perhaps the disciples looked at one another, and wondered and inquired within themselves, "What does He want with us, and how are we to do it?" But the

Lord does not wait; He answers all inquiries Himself: "the harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few." I know the thought arising in your hearts—the labourers are few in comparison with the great need: so they are; but "pray ye, therefore, the Lord of the harvest that He will send forth labourers into His harvest." It may be the Lord did not join in this prayer, because He would place Himself before us as the Lord of the harvest. But however this may be, let us mark the important truth to be taught us by this command which He gives to His disciples. It is very striking and instructive. He shows them that there is a preparatory work to be done before they go out to labour. They must first of all be on their knees; they must have close personal dealing with Him. They must come into His Presence, look into His face, and hear His voice speaking to their inmost souls with living power. They must go forth from that Presence to their solemn work. reminds them not to let the excessive need drive them hurriedly forward: and what follows? Chapter xi.: "And when He had called unto Him His twelve disciples. He gave them power against unclean spirits to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease." There is a similar passage to this in St. Mark iii. 13-16. We have, first, the calling unto Him, then the being with Him, and the going forth from Him, with the power administered by Him to do the work in His harvest-field. Without it they would have run in vain, and laboured in vain.

Is there not a lesson for us in this? We call ourselves workers for God; and oh! how wondrous is the honour, how solemn the responsibility, to be called by Him to go forth with the name of Jesus on our lips and on our foreheads, declaring we are accredited by Him, and telling a dying world what He has done for us and for them! It is striking to notice how our Lord connects all labour with Himself, and shows us we cannot truly work for Him unless sent forth by Him. He seems to say, "I have been about the cities and villages, I see the masses of sheep without a shepherd, I have compassion on them, and I want you to pray for labourers to be sent into the harvest, and then, in answer to the prayer I have commanded, I will send the labourers."

Let us think much about this command, coming as it does from the Lord of the harvest. The fact that He is such warrants large expectations. When God savs "Pray," oh, who can tell what He means to do! One thing is certain, He is going to answer that prayer. Have we understood this,-have we really dealt with prayer as a command, and in the command have we seen a solemn promise involved? Be very sure it is not this mode of working or that clever planning that is wanted to bring down a blessing; but this is what we need—to know Jesus ourselves as the Living One.—to know Him by dwelling very near to Him, having close and constant dealing with Him as a present friend, and drawing hourly from Him as the well of living waters. We ask, and we hear asked, "Why is there so little power amongst us—so little result from our labours? Why do we see so vast a machinery at work and yet so few getting an abundance of blessing?" Ah! is it not because we are not with Jesus—have not remained in the secret of His Presence—and therefore He could not send us forth with power. We do not know how long the disciples spent there, but I am quite sure that in proportion to their intercourse with Him, they had power with souls. It is not for us to judge one another, but we may safely say there will be no certain, abiding blessing in any work but as the workers come out from the Master's Presence, and bring with them the bright shining of His countenance.

Dark days may be very near—sifting days for the Church of God, which will try every man's work, of what sort it is, which will prove what is gold and silver and precious stones, built on the true foundation, and what is only "wood, hay, and stubble." May ours be work which will stand testing. It is not carnal power, not the power of human eloquence, or knowledge, or intellect, that will reach souls; it may rouse the conscience and enlighten the understanding to a certain extent, but no more. The power of the Spirit of God must do spiritual work, and our lips must be touched with a live coal from off His altar.

Surely, surely, as the loving Shepherd looks now upon the fainting, weary multitudes, with all their overwhelming needs, and then upon the crowds of labourers who are rushing forth into the field in all the restlessness and hurry of human excitement, He may well say: "Are ye not carnal, and walk as men." We want workers, but we want only those who come from the presence chamber of the Master—only those who have heard Him say: "Lovest thou Me more than these? Then feed my sheep." May He take away all that now hinders and enfeebles the testimony of his witnessing Church, and make her indeed a telling power in a dark and sorrowful world!

The Sunbest Jome.

John iv. 86.

"That both he that soweth, and he that reapeth, may rejoice together."

From the far-off fields of earthly toil
A goodly host they come,
And sounds of music are on the air,—
'Tis the song of the Harvest-home.
The weariness and the weeping—
The darkness has all pass'd by,
And a glorious sun has risen—
The Sun of Eternity!

We've seen those faces in days of yore,
When the dust was on their brow,
And the scalding tear upon their cheek:
Let us look at the labourers now!
We think of the life-long sorrow,
And the wilderness days of care;
We try to trace the tear-drops,
But no scars of grief are there.

There's a mystery of soul-chasten'd joy
Lit up with sun-light hues,
Like morning flowers, most beautiful
When wet with midnight dews.
There are depths of earnest meaning
In each true and trustful gaze,
Telling of wondrous lessons
Learnt in their pilgrim days.

And a conscious confidence of bliss,
That shall never again remove,—
All the faith and hope of journeying years,
Gather'd up in that look of love.
The long waiting days are over;
They 've received their wages now,
For they 've gazed upon their Master,
And His name is on their brow.

They've seen the safely-garner'd sheaves,
And the song has been passing sweet,
Which welcomed the last in-coming one
Laid down at the Saviour's feet.
Oh! well does His heart remember,
As those notes of praise sweep by,
The yearning, plaintive music
Of earth's sadder minstrelsy.

And well does He know each chequer'd tale,
As He looks on that joyous band—
All the lights and shadows that crossed their path,
In the distant pilgrim land;—
The heart's unspoken anguish—
The bitter sighs and tears—
The long long hours of watching—
The changeful hopes and fears!

One had climb'd the rugged mountain-side,
'Twas a bleak and wintry day;

The tempest had scatter'd his precious seed,
And he wept as he turn'd away.

But a stranger-hand had water'd

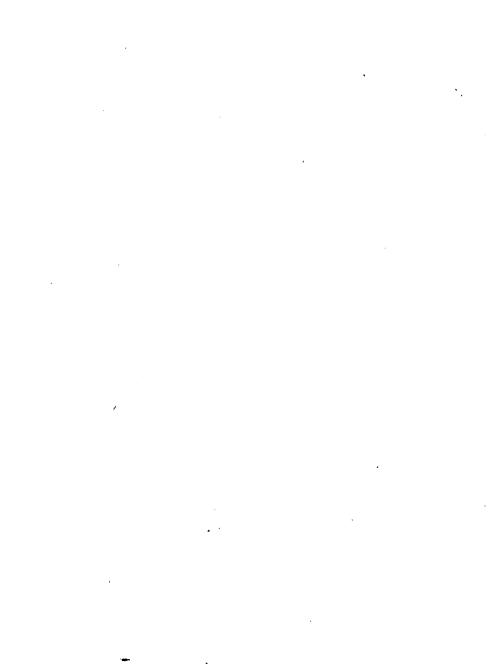
That seed on a distant shore,
And the labourers now are meeting,
Who had never met before

And one—he had toil'd amid burning sands
When the scorching sun was high:
He had grasp'd the plough with a fever'd hand,
And then laid him down to die:
But another, and yet another,
Had fill'd that deserted field,
Nor vainly the seed they scatter'd,
Where a brother's care had till'd.

Some with eager step went boldly forth,
Broad casting o'er the land
Some water'd the scarcely budding blade
With a tender, gentle hand.
There's one—her young life was blighted,
By the withering touch of woe
Her days were sad and weary,
And she never went forth to sow;

But there rose from her lonely couch of pain,
The fervent, pleading prayer;
She looks on many a radiant brow,
And she reads the answer there!
Yes! sowers and reapers are meeting;
A rejoicing host they come!
Will you join the echoing chorus?——
'Tis the song of the Harvest-home!

C. PENNEFATHER.



The following are the Classes from which the Notes are taken:-

THE MOTHERS' MEETING.

Monday, 2.36 3 30.

St. Jude's Lecture Hall, Mildmay Road.

THE YOUNG WOMEN'S BIBLE CLASS.

Tuesday, 7.30,

THE BROAD STREET WARD SCHOOL, 59, LONDON WALL, E.C.

THE MOTHERS' MEETING,

Wednesday, 3 o'Clock,

SILESIA HOUSE, MARE STREET, HACKNEY.

THE LADIES' BIBLE CLASS,

Thursday (formightty), 11.45.

HIGHBURY.

THE FEMALE WORKERS' BIBLE CLASS,

Friday, 7 15.

(Fortnightly) 133, MILDMAY ROAD.

(Monthly) FRIARS' MOUNT, BETHNAL GREEN. .

THE YOUNG WOMEN'S BIBLE CLASS,

Sunday, 3 15,

133, MILDMAY ROAD.

"Gather up the Fragments."

NOTES

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By C. P.

TAKEN DOWN BY A LADY.

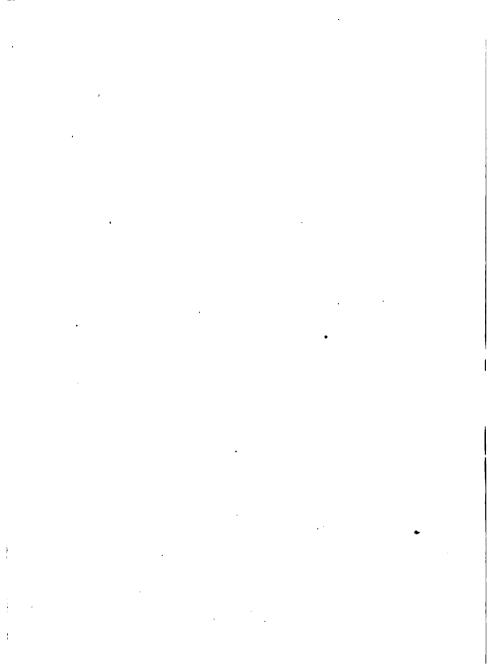
PART III.

COLOSSIANS I. 7—11. COLOSSIANS I. 12—18. ISAIAH XL. 28—31.

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A strong desire has been expressed by many of the members of MRS. PENNEFATHER'S Bible Classes, that her lessons from the Word of God, and the valuable practical hints they receive from her, might, in a printed form, become more permanent, and also reach those friends who, residing at a distance from London, would gladly share in the benefit of her scriptural instruction.

Yielding to the request conveyed to her, MRS. PENNEFATHER has kindly consented to allow a few notes, taken from her EXTEMPORE Addresses by a Lady present at the Classes, to be issued in a series.

These Notes are necessarily of a fragmentary character, as questions are constantly asked and new subjects are brought forward arising out of such inquiries.

The various Bible Classes at which these notes have been taken are mentioned on the cover, and will serve to suggest the occasions for which they are more especially adapted.

The profits from the sale of this Publication, which will be issued in January, April, July, and October, will be devoted to the support of THE NORTH LONDON DEACONESSES' HOME, an Institution for the training of Home and Foreign Missionaries and for Nurses, a brief account of which has just been published under the title of

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The Jemale Workers' Class.

Col. i. 7-11.

"As ye also learned of Epaphras our dear fellow servant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ;

"Who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit.

"For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;

"That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God:

"Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness."

VERSE 7. The Apostle St. Paul seems never to lose an opportunity of drawing in closely and yet more closely the bonds of love which united together ministers and people, brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus. He writes to the Colossians here as though he would say—"These blessed things that I have just been speaking of, you learned of Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, and your faithful minister," as though he would draw a beautiful picture of love acting and re-acting. Epaphras goes to the Colossian Church as a witness, as a messenger of love, from the loving apostle, and then he bears tidings back again of the loving spirit of that loving church to cheer the apostle. It would seem as if he again rejoiced to use words in his letter which would

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remind the Colossians of the debt they owed Epaphras, that he might kindle in their hearts a fresh spark of love towards this beloved minister, when he adds, "who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit."

Is there not a practical lesson for us here? What power there is in an atmosphere of love! The more we live in the presence of Jesus, in the full sunshine of His countenance, and breathe the fragrance of His love, the more shall we carry it about with us. Oh! let us count it no mean thing to be the bearers of good tidings to one of Christ's little ones. "Pleasant words are as a honeycomb,"—Let us speak them; let us carry sweet messages to burdened ministers; let us be on the watch to find out what will cheer, and comfort, and enliven the tried servants of the Lord, studying to carry words of peace and health as we go in and out among men and women, and delighting to tell afresh of the manifestations of the Master's presence, of what His grace has done, and His love wrought amongst us.

But is it not often far otherwise? Does it not sometimes seem as if Christians were looking out for all the infirmities they could find around them, and in talking of one another, do they not too often throw a cloud of undefined suspicion over the character of the absent, and leave a chilling sense of distrust and discomfort in the heart of the hearer. Ought this so to be? It requires no talent to find out the evil in human nature; for, alas! it is patent and palpable to every observer. But it does require the ingenuity and sharp-sightedness of love to

detect the good and the beautiful amid so much surrounding rubbish.

Many things combine to make useful workers in the Lord's vineyard; but, depend upon it, the power to discover the good in others, the tender impressible place in the natures we have to deal with, is essential, and in order to do this we must carry about with us an atmosphere of love. As we are loving ourselves, we shall be sure to call out the responsive love in the hearts of others; we shall be sure to touch that point where it is to be found; we shall, as it were, meet, discover, and attract that which in its very exercise will be of necessity strengthened and developed. Let us pray much for this heart of love, and cultivate such a quickness of perception and such a tenderness of dealing, that all that is loving and lovely may have an affinity for us, and we for it.

Notice what an impetus the words of Epaphras gave to the apostle's prayers, verse 9: "For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will, in all wisdom and understanding."

What a wonderful prayer it is. He desires three distinct things for them—knowledge, wisdom, and understanding; or, in other words, that they should go on to know more and more of the unsearchable riches of Christ. What is the difference between these three expressions? Perhaps we may distinguish them thus. Knowledge—is something acquired, it may be by reading

or from any other source, not a faculty but a possession put into the mind from without. Understandingseems to be the intellectual grasp of the mind, the power to receive: the faculty which lavs hold on the knowledge. Wisdom—is the practical application of all that is learnt by the understanding, the knowledge turned to account in daily life. It has been called "the complex of all the faculties of the soul." Look at Psalm exix, 98: "Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies, for they are ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers, for thy testimonies are my meditation." Here the commandments are the knowledge which, as we read, make David wiser than all his teachers, wiser than those who ought to have known more than he. Again, Proverbs xxiv. 3: "Through wisdom is an house builded, and by understanding it is established: and by knowledge shall the chambers be filled with all precious and pleasant riches." This description of a house brings before us the three words of which we have been speaking. Wisdom and understanding—the means by which it is built and established; knowledge, the furnishing and adorning. Apply this to the character of a Christian; wisdom is like the building of a house, but a wise person must keep the understanding constantly at work, increasing his power by its exercise and always acquiring more and more knowledge. When you have a house you may have a very substantial, handsome building, but it must be established, filled and adorned. Knowledge is to the soul what furnishing

is to the house; it does for the mind and soul what pleasant things do for the house, and if we are too indolent to cry after knowledge and to "lift up our voice for understanding" (Proverbs ii. 3), we shall have little to impart to others, and shall not be wise to win souls.

A useful Christian must needs be a learning Christian. Sleepiness and indolence of mind is incompatible with a life of service; we must be looking out for instruction, all our faculties kept active and lively, that we may be receiving all day and every day. But to go higher, how important it is to have the mind furnished with scriptural knowledge,-for this reason we would press the importance of teaching children much scripture. It is like furnishing the house to be inhabited, as we pray and hope, by the Spirit of God. How sadly many a soul, converted in later years, and uninstructed in the word of God, has to mourn over an unfurnished house! But, to return to the apostle's prayer for the Colossian Church, in which he had so much satisfaction and delight, we find he says, "I pray earnestly for you, and desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;" and he adds, it is for this practical purpose, "that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing." Does not this show us that ignorance of soul is not pleasing to God, and that intellect and memory, imagination and affection, every power of the being, every faculty, contemplative or active, receptive or perceptive, is to be consecrated to the Master's use. When the Spirit of God breathes into

us His own divine life He puts the seal of ownership upon the understanding, upon the mind, upon the affections, upon the life. He seals us to His especial service, and this is the meaning of being not our own. There is the seal of adoption which He puts upon us to declare us members of the redeemed family, purchased by the blood of the covenant; but there is the sealing of possession also, proving that everything we have and are belongs to God. If Christians realised this we should see among them more whole-heartedness, and entire consecration, and hear less questioning as to the extent or measure of service. If we only looked upon our body, mind and heart as sealed, as God's possession, we should regard it nothing short of robbery to take His property and make it over to the world. Look at Joel iii. 5: "Ye have taken my silver and my gold, and have carried into your temple my goodly pleasant things;" might not this be said every day to our so-called Christians? Oh! how many are spending the Master's property, His time and His money in this way! And even souls that have known something of His love, where is their whole-hearted service?

Verse 10. "That ye might walk worthy of the Lord;" that your walk, your daily life, might be corresponding to the life of Him whose Name you bear; that you should represent Jesus before the world. O how high, how holy is the Christian calling! To go out into a rebel world, and to tell that world of the character of God; to be so many windows through which the light of

Jesus shines upon its darkness!—this is our wondrous vocation.

"Unto all pleasing." Depend upon it, we are not walking worthy of the Lord unless we are increasing every day in the knowledge of God. It is a law in the natural world that every thing which stands still stagnates. Water becomes impure when it ceases to flow. There must be in the believer's heart not only the Spirit, once given, but the well of water springing up, always tending upward and onward with greater vitality and power as time goes on, until it finds its level in everlasting life. Is it so with us? If not, there is something wrong. We cannot be what we were a year ago, without dishonour to our Master. Job xvii. 9: "The righteous also shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger." There may be many changings, many tossings and storms, but every child of God, in a healthy state of spiritual life, can say: "I am not where I was; there has been much to humble me, and I have learnt by many failures, but there has been a conscious on-going." Thank God, no living Christian does stand still. He learns more and more of the Father's love, more and more of the grace and power of his risen Lord, and drinks more deeply of the consolations of the Spirit, as we read in Ps. lxxxiv. 7: "They go from strength to strength;" and again, Isa. xl. 31: "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength." It is a wretched thing to go on feeding on the manna of yesterday, to get no

fresh draught from the living fountain. It is well to ask, are we going from strength to strength? Are we learning more distrust of self, more confidence in the unfailing One, more knowledge of his inexhaustible resources? We are sometimes asked what are the proofs of growth of grace. I think one of the most striking is increased humility. As a Christian advances there is sure to be more lowliness of spirit, less disposition to judge, more desire to learn. It has been well said: "The branches of a tree which bear the most fruit hang the nearest to the ground." I think we go more softly, and speak with less of self-confidence in our tone, and are less ready to advance our own opinions, as we know more of the Master and more of ourselves. is a very practical matter. Are we increasing, advancing, pressing onwards? If so, we shall be able to say with the Psalmist: "I will hope continually, and will yet praise Thee more and more." For as we learn to distrust man, we shall find out more of His faithfulness every step of our way. Everything earthly is tending to decay, but the Christian is going on to perfection, and learning new songs of praise, to be sung in his Father's house by-and-by.

Now we come to the *power* for all this; and were it not for these words how could we attempt to attain to such a standing: "Strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power; or, as some read it, "according to the power of His glory." The measure of our strength is *His* glorious *power*. Not our asking, but

His giving; not our conceptions, but His capability; not our limited desires, but His immeasurable grace; or, in other words, the fulness of God. And what sort of character will be developed by the in-flowing of this unbounded strength?

We should be inclined to say, perhaps, a very active working character, one that will do great things and attract great admiration: but this word says: "Unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness"—a character that the world might call very poor and mean-spirited. Oh, when will God's people learn to view characters and actions and circumstances from God's stand-point! When shall we habitually recognise that the things which are highly esteemed among men are abomination in the sight of God! The worldly-minded man (whatever his profession as a Christian) looks at the gentle, patient, long-suffering follower of a lowly Master, and turns away with ill-concealed scorn. God weighs the meek and quiet spirit in the balance of the sanctuary, and pronounces it "of great price." Oh, for a longsuffering which will not be exhausted, and a forbearance which will endure unto the end!

But this is not all. Nothing wears down the spirit or wears out the power so much as continued trial, and yet we are called "to long-suffering with joyfulness." "The waters wear the stones,"—God is educating us here to fit us for our position in the kingdom hereafter. Dear friends, it is well to submit; it is better to rejoice. It is much to say, "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth."

It is more to count it all joy when you fall into divers temptations. Men will see you have meat to eat, of which the world knows not, when you can meet daily crosses and live among unreasonable people without losing the sunshine on your brow or the music in your voice—when you can suffer much and suffer long "with joyfulness."



The Jemule Workers' Bible Class.

Colossians i. 12-18.

"Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light:

"Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath

translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:

"In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins:

"Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every

creature :

"For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:

"And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.

"And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence."

THINK there is an evident connection between this verse (twelfth) and the close of the eleventh, for, if anything would help us to be patient and long-suffering, would it not be the sense of our Father's unspeakable love? What will the toils of the wilderness seem when the kingdom is full in view?

"Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet." It seems as if there was something here of the spirit of the fifty-first chapter of Isaiah, where we are told to "look to the rock whence ye were hewn, and the hole of the pit whence ye were digged." Am I, a

redeemed sinner, to be impatient or weary of others when God has done such great things for me: I, who deserved nothing; I, who am utterly unworthy of the least of His mercies?

There has been a good deal of discussion about these words, much that is unprofitable. It is wonderful how we waste time disputing about words, when we ought to be learning deep and holy lessons of truth. Volumes are written, it may be, upon the critical meaning of some particular word, while the great teaching of the passage is forgotten. One of the last messages of a dear and aged servant of God before he was taken away was: "Tell the dear Christians not to be disputing about words and questions, but to be ever found 'looking unto Jesus.'" Oh, that we could all learn this, and show greater anxiety to ascertain the practical teaching of the Word of God!

Let us, then, look at this verse, and ask what are the lessons God designs to teach us. It has been one of the great points of discussion, whether the meetness spoken of here has to do with sanctification or with justification,—whether it has to do with the believer's standing in Christ, or with the work of the Spirit in the believer. I think the point that may help us to understand it is the fact, that it is the Father who is here brought before us. We know that all the Persons of the Holy Trinity are engaged in the work of a sinner's salvation; but, generally speaking, when inwrought holiness is alluded to, the Spirit is brought before us.

Here it is the Father. What, then, is the meetness if it be the Father's work? Perhaps the passage might be rendered thus: "Capable of being partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." We who were outside, we who were foreigners, outcasts, has He made meet to share in the glorious inheritance of the saints. The Father gives the meetness of adoption, and this includes everything else, because it is the first step: it is the putting the pardoned sinner into the place of the child,—the outcast into the kingdom; and if we are made meet to be adopted, surely we shall be made meet in every other respect. The work of the Spirit is all assured to us,—the adopted child will be made the obedient child. An old writer says: "This meetness has to do with the present and the future;" and perhaps it has. The same thought is conveyed in the words. "partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." It is not to be attached entirely either to our state here or to our state hereafter; it is the bringing us into a place in the kingdom of God, which makes us inheritors of all that belongs to the portion of His saints.

"The inheritance of the saints in light." It is sometimes asked, does this mean the saints who are walking in light now as the children of the day, or does it refer to the saints who will walk in the eternal glory by-and-by? May it not mean both? The light in which the saints walk now is merely the antepast of that glory in which they will walk hereafter. When you are

brought into the Father's family, you inherit all that belongs to that family—the present privileges and the future inheritance. It is well for us to pause and ask, "Am I a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light? have I been brought into the glorious light here, in anticipation of the perfected light—that morning without clouds—which mine eyes shall behold in the kingdom above?

The thirteenth verse is very beautiful, following upon this: "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son." The words, "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness," seem in contrast with "the inheritance of the saints in light," and "hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son." We have, as it were, the figure of two countries brought before us: the one lying under the cloud of sin and darkness, and the deep shadow of the curse; and the other, the kingdom of light and blessedness. takes us out of the one, and translates us into the other. I believe "the power of darkness" does not merely mean Satan, but that kingdom which is under darkness, in the cloud and the shadow of death. It is out of this we are transplanted into that of "His dear Son," or, as it ought to be rendered, "the Son of His love." How emphatic are those words! Is it not the greatest act of loving-kindness which God the Father could show to any soul, the highest honour which even He could bestow, to put the one so honoured into the kingdom of the Son of His love, to bring him into communion and fellowship with Jesus, the One whom He loves? ever we are inclined to murmur, let us call to mind this thought—once an outcast, now a child, an heir of the kingdom, a joint heir with the Son of His love! Surely the song of praise will be on our lips, not now and then, but we shall echo the words of the Psalmist, "While I live will I praise the Lord." &c., Ps. cxlvi. 1, 2. I think we should hear Christians talk less of being slighted or undervalued, of being misjudged or overlooked, if the overwhelming sense of mercy, unmerited mercy, with its far-reaching consequences, were filling our hearts. Let us ever be giving thanks unto God for His unspeakable gift, and we shall surely learn to go in and out among our fellow men thankfully and joyfully, and to do all things without murmurings and disputings.

Verse 14. "In whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins." It seems as if this were the qualification for the possession described in the 13th verse. We could not have been put into the new country, translated into the kingdom of light, without the washing with the blood, the cleansing of the stain; but, having redemption through His blood and the forgiveness of sins, we can enjoy fellowship with the saints and with the household of God. I believe one great reason why so many people are not stronger in the service of God is that they have no clear sense of acceptance. Now, how can we tell a sinner of a salvation which

we are not sure we ourselves have received? We may speak the truth clearly and eloquently, and many do: we may say a great deal that is good and very important: but we cannot speak with the power of one who, like the apostles, testifies of that which he hath seen, and speaks of that which he knows. It is a poor weak testimony if we cannot say in speaking to a sinner's soul: "This is the Saviour that I have found; He has healed me, He will heal you." We may, or we may not, be able to give any very definite account of the day or hour when we first beheld Jesus as ours: I believe in this respect there are varieties of leading; but if we cannot say. "This is the Saviour that has rescued me, this is the blood that has washed me, this is the salvation which I myself have experienced," there must be a lack of power about our testimony. And I would say to any dear worker for the Lord who is not clear upon this point, do not be satisfied until you can say, "He loved me and gave Himself for me." This full conscious confidence honours your Lord, and strengthens your hands. You want it now for service, and, depend upon it, you will want it in the hour of death. It will not do amid the swellings of Jordan to enquire for the land whither you are going-it will not do when the enemy is coming in like a flood, to meet him with a peradventure-it will not do amid the weakness and anguish of a dying bed, to have to feel for the rock on which you stand. Let it be a settled point to-day that Jesus Christ is yours, and, come what may, in service or in suffering.

you will find that He is "the same yesterday and to-day, and for ever."

In these next verses, we have one of those parenthetical passages, though not strictly speaking a parenthesis, which we find in the writings of St. Paul, and which we may often notice in this very connection. When he mentions the Saviour of sinners, the name that is above every name, he goes off as it were into a strain of exulting admiration; -that inspiring thought must have room to expatiate—that wondrous key-note must have its variations. He loses himself for a little while in adoration of his Lord, before he can go on with his argument. It seems as if he did so here, verse 14, "In whom"-even "the Son of His love"-" we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins; who is the image of the invisible God, the Firstborn of every creature," or, as it has been translated, "the First-begotten before every creature."

But first, "who is the image of the invisible God?" This can only be said of the Lord Jesus Christ. We know an image is a counterpart, it is the same thing over again, it is more than a reflection in a mirror, it is more than a likeness. We have a similar expression concerning the Lord Jesus Christ in 2 Cor. iv. 4: "In whom the God of this world hath blinded the eyes of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." Again, look at Hebrews i. 3: "Who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His

person;" that is, just as closely resembling the Unseen One as the impression of the seal upon the wax resembles the seal itself.

Perhaps there is a meaning here in the contrast of the "image" with the "invisible," because an image is a thing seen. Jesus is the visible expression of the invisible God. All through Scripture we find this to be the characteristic of the Son of God in His mission upon earth; He is the revealing of the unseen Father to His children. So in His title of "the Word," God speaks to His creatures, who could not otherwise have understood Him, by that Word. Jesus Christ is the declaration of God, whether you think of Him as the shining forth of a light which in its brightness no mortal eye could bear to look upon, as the Word breaking the eternal silence, or as a visible image representing the invisible essence. Let me say it again: Jesus Christ is the Light shining, the Image representing, the Word speaking. "No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father He hath declared Him."

I think it is important that we should very clearly explain this in all our teaching and Bible classes. One of the greatest difficulties is to bring very deep truth into very simple language; and, in speaking to poor ignorant people, we may have to throw it into a great many different forms before it is clearly understood. But never give it up, for when a mind grasps this manifestation of God in Christ, it lays hold of the truth of revelation, 1 Timothy iii. 16. We know it is only the Spirit of

God that can really enlighten a soul, but let us see to it that we have that Spirit's teaching ourselves—that we have laid hold of the truth we desire to communicate. Get a grasp of your subject and then illustrate, break up, depict—use every possible means—give milk to babes and meat to those of riper years; and above all, pray, pray, pray without ceasing—and rest assured that your labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.

There is probably another thought in the Apostle's mind in these verses. The first Adam was made in the image of God and he lost it: the second Adam came to carry out perfectly that which the first Adam had entirely failed to do. Adam was wrecked immediately, but there could be no wreck with the second Man, who was "the Lord from heaven." The great object of the devil from first to last has been to make a ruin of God's work; and, when he found Adam and Eve as an innocent man and woman in Paradise, he saw he could not hinder their blessings, unless he could wreck their holiness; and so, artfully and fatally, he did it. The great and glorious work of Christ is just the restoration of that holiness—the re-assertion of His Father's honour—the restitution of all things.

Again, "the Firstborn of every creature" is a very remarkable expression. Perhaps it would convey more to a Jewish mind than to ourselves, the firstborn always took such a high place in a Jewish family. The term implies not only primogeniture, but unrivalled dignity;

the Firstborn took a place that no other would attempt to invade. We see these two thoughts in Psalm lxxxix. After speaking of the Redeemer under various characters, the Psalmist brings us to the rights of primogeniture, the dignity of the Firstborn in verse 27.

Perhaps in order to see clearly the bearing of this 15th verse, we may divide it into these two heads—the Firstborn in the natural creation, verse 16, and the Firstborn in the new creation, verse 18. It puts Him into the seat of dignity in both, "who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature," or of all creation. Now let us carry on that thought, verse 16, "For by Him "-or in Him-"were all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him and for Him." There He is the Firstborn in creation. Then, verse 17. "And He is before all things," in the eternity of His Godhead, "and by Him all things consist"—He, who created, upholds, or holds together. And now comes as it were another branch of the subject: "And He is the Head of the body, the Church, who is the Beginning, the Firstborn from the dead, that in all things he might have the pre-eminence." He takes His place as the Firstborn in the new creation by virtue of the resurrection, as He had before taken His place as the Firstborn It seems almost as if the in the natural creation. Apostle gave him three thrones. He places Him in His original position with the Father as the Son of His love,

and enthrones Him there; then he places Him before us as the Firstborn in all creation, and enthrones him there: and then as the Firstborn in the new creation—the First-begotten from the dead—the Head of the Church—and enthrones Him there. This is a wonderful passage. It has been said of it, that the archetypes of all existence are to be found in Jesus; as though in Him there were patterns of creation in all its varied phases. There was nothing created that was not embodied in Him: He contained within Himself the pattern of every thing yet to be exhibited (1 Chron. xxviii. 12), and when it actually sprang into being it was all by Him, and all for Him. In order to get the full meaning of the words in the 16th verse, we must read it: "For in Him were all things created," and then "all things were created by Him and for Him." It is so mighty a subject that perhaps we can better meditate upon it than explain it; but let us at least take away this thought, which we find pervading the whole Word of God, that the great glory of the Father will be in the exaltation of the Son from first to last. He came out of His bosom as the Beloved One from all eternity: He came to be the Incarnate One, and so to be the image of the Father. He came to gather in a redeemed Church by the work which He performed on earth, and He is gone back again to the Father to represent that redeemed Church before the throne. And when He comes forth again from the Father's presence, it will be as the Kingly Bridegroom of that saved and sanctified Church; then "every knee shall bow before Him, and every tongue confess that He is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Verse 18, last clause. "Who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He might have the pre-eminence." Look at Psalm ii. 5-7: "Then shall He speak unto them in His wrath, and vex them in His sore displeasure; yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten Thee." Here we find God the Father speaking to God the Son, and putting Him into the throne of authority. Do we enquire as to the full meaning and application of this passage? St. Paul quotes it in his sermon at Antioch in Pisidia (Acts xiii. 32). and distinctly connects it with resurrection blessings. We seem to see the wave-sheaf carried in as the firstfruits of the coming harvest (Leviticus xxiii. 10, 11.); we behold Jesus as the Firstborn in resurrection enter the courts of heaven, saying as it were by anticipation, "Behold Me and the children whom Thou hast given Me."

In Revelation iii. 14, the Lord Jesus announces Himself as the Firstborn: "These things saith the Amen, the beginning of the creation of God." It seems to imply the same thought as we have in Colossians—that He is the beginning of the creation of God, both in the universe itself, and in the Church of which He is the Head, and resurrection glory is the very climax of His

pre-eminence. Again, look at Revelation i. 18: "I am He that liveth and was dead: and, behold, I am alive for evermore." That is your security both for the resurrection of the body and for the preservation of the soul which He has redeemed. He just stands before you as the Risen One-the One who has overcome death-the One who has fought the great fight and vanguished the enemy; who has passed through the grave and gate of death and come out on the other side; who has breasted the cold wave and climbed the opposite shore. In this verse there is something to my mind of deepest consolation. I do not know any words of such unspeakable comfort to God's weeping and bereaved ones. He that liveth "-but it does not stop there-" and was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore." I am the One that lives on the other side of death—the One who has gone down to the cold depths of the tomb and come safely up—the One who has seen the darkness there. the terrors of the curse, and has left it all behind. And then, as a consequence of this dark descent and this accomplished victory, it is added: "and have the keys of Hades and of death "-" I am the keeper of the ransomed spirit and of the sleeping dust;" as if He would tell us that, when the body is put into the tomb, He turns the key, takes it out of the lock and says: "No hand but Mine shall ever touch that sacred clay; no voice but Mine shall ever speak that body into resurrection glory." Does it not give us a sense of unutterable safety? Jesus locks the grave—Jesus takes the key; we can trust Him with the dearest thing we have on the face of God's earth.

But, again: "That in all things He might have the pre-eminence." We cannot find a spot in all the creation of God where Jesus is not the pre-eminent One-not a place in all the redeemed Church of God, in its service now and its glory hereafter, in which Jesus does not justly take His position of Headship. It is such grand simplicity. I have often noticed how dying saints come to this point—it seems the focus at which all saved ones meet. One who has but lately gone home said: "All my religion is summed up in one word—Jesus." And is it not a mercy that it is so? There are so many degrees of intelligence, so many stages of intellectual development among the children of God, such different degrees of educational acquirement, that it is well, from the babe to the oldest saint in the family of God, we may come to this—our religion is all summed up, as we say, from the depths of a soul that has wept at the cross and triumphed at the open grave, "Jesus, the Son of His love."

One more practical word before we leave this blessed verse: "That in all things He might have the pre-eminence." Let us be very jealous of any creed or any opinion that does not give Jesus His right place as the Head of the Church, not only in His crucifixion, but in resurrection also—Firstborn in the resurrection.

It is true, we cannot give too much prominence to the work of the Lord Jesus as the crucified One, but we may hide the resurrection behind the cross. It is possible to dwell on the wounds and bruises, the thorns and the spear, not too much, but to the exclusion of the victory; and, after all, the wounds, and the thorns, and the sufferings, and the grave, would have been a fruitless endurance without the opening of the tomb, for they would only have proved Satan's hate and Jesus' unutterable love, and exhibited that bitter hate slaying that incarnate love. The crucifixion was the bruising of the Saviour's heel; the resurrection is the bruising of the serpent's head.

I think, too, we should be very guarded in our study of some books which, while they have a great deal of beautiful teaching in them, and are exceedingly attractive, especially to young Christians, yet have a tendency to leave their readers, if I may so say, amid the shadows that preceded the morning of the third day. There is a sort of sentimental dwelling upon the sufferings of Christ, and a hiding away of the glorious truth of His resurrec-There is much of this in Rome's services of the tion. holy week. Beautiful and touching as their observance of Good Friday may be, the conception is designedly imperfect, and surely unscriptural; there is sentiment, and poetry, and painting, and much, we doubt not, of sincere devotional feeling, but not the simple presentation of Jesus, "who liveth and was dead"-of the truth of God in all its length and breadth and depth and height to the sinner's soul. Let us beware of making a picture to be looked at, where God reveals a truth to be believed.

of acting a drama, instead of trusting a living Lord, of giving God morbid feelings, in place of a heart's allegiance. You may take the Lord Jesus Christ as the crucified One, the bruised One, the wounded One, the accursed One for you; but never forget that all this suffering was only the gate of victory—the road to conquest. He might have been the bleeding, wounded, agonising man, and yet have been no Saviour for sinners—the conquered one rather than the conqueror, -and therefore did the apostles so emphatically preach "Jesus and the resurrection." They loved their Lord certainly as much as we do, and must have been as much in sympathy with His wounds and sufferings as ever we can be; they had seen the cross-had stood beside it on Calvary-had heard the bitter anguish of that cry-"My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" Some of them had actually beheld the bloodsweat in Gethsemane; and yet, when they came out to preach Christ's gospel to a world of sinners, what was their message? We do not find them engaged in drawing sensuous pictures, or harrowing the natural feelings to excite religious emotion; but we find them, in all the fulness of Pentecostal power, simply preaching "Jesus and the resurrection."

We might say much more, but let us rather pray that God may make us very wise, very careful, and very humble. Remember that truth is very humble, and error is very positive: truth is very thirsty to know more, error is well pleased and satisfied with its own knowledge, and thinks itself far in advance of other people.

May the Spirit of the living God teach each one of us His own truth, and make us long to sit like children at the Master's feet, that every day we may hear His voice, and understand more and more what the will of the Lord is. I think the nearer we get to the great revealing day, the more conscious we are how little we know. We are in our school days, learning our first lesson—the first and the last—the name of Jesus; and oh! (thank God we can lisp it now) we shall sing it ere long in "the city of the living God, the heavenly Jeru-"salem, with an innumerable company of angels, with "the general assembly and Church of the firstborn, and "with the spirits of just men made perfect."



The Jemale Workers' Class, FRIARS' MOUNT, BETHNAL GREEN.

Isaiah xl. 27-81.

"Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God?

"Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding.

"He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no

might he increaseth strength.

"Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall:

"But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."

I SUPPOSE there is no text that comes more frequently before the minds of God's labourers than that much needed one, "Let us not be weary in well doing," Gal. vi. 9.

The thought of fainting is constantly taken up in Scripture, doubtless because He knows how the pressure of work, with its many disappointments, tells on His poor children. I speak of His own, true, converted people; for when we address ourselves to workers, we meet them, pre-supposing that they are God's workers, that they are labouring in His vineyard, with the con-

straining love of a grateful heart, just because they want to serve Him who has done so much for them.

Yet I think we often meet, as faint workers, weary workers, and it is to these the Lord addresses Himself in this passage. We know—He has told us—that "in due season we shall reap, if we faint not."

That word faint occurs four times in the verses we have just read. First, in verse 28; it is spoken, as it were, half reproachfully to an unbelieving heart. seems as if the prophet is dealing with one who had been judging God by human eyesight and human The unbelieving heart is reproached for not standards. knowing—not remembering—that the Everlasting God. the Lord, the Governor of the Universe, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary. The prophet says to such an one: "You suppose He has forgotten you, you are suspecting that God's eye is not upon you, that He has passed over you as too insignificant to be noticed; have you never heard that He does not weary, that He never faints, that He is never worried by minuteness or overwhelmed by vastness? If He were a man you might thus judge Him; but have you not heard from the lips of others, and learnt in your own experience, that He never overlooks or forgets one among all His children that are scattered up and down in this wilderness world?"

It is remarkable that He is brought before us here as the *Creator*. It has reference, I think, to the 26th verse: "Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: He calleth them all by names by the greatness of His might, for that He is strong in power: not one faileth." Try and take in the thought that this mighty Creator is your tender, considerate Father, your unfailing Friend. David beautifully connects the two thoughts in Psalm viii. Sometimes we get so weary that we want something altogether fresh and new to look upon. Does it not seem as if the prophet was dealing with one in such a state of mind; and he says, "Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things:" there is no fainting, there is no failure in the orderings The inanimate world around and above of creation. you has blessed lessons for you. It reminds us of that story of Mungo Park, which many of us will remember, when, as he was travelling in the desert, he was attacked and stripped of all his clothing by a band of savages. and even his brave spirit was on the point of giving way, when suddenly, in a little nook under a rock, his eye caught sight of a beautiful piece of moss in full fructification; the thought struck him-Is it likely that He who has taken care of this little plant and provided for its need has forgotten me? Once more he struggled on. and his life was saved. So the prophet here calls us to look up at God in creation. Has not that same God said, "Ye are of more value than many sparrows?" again, "The hairs of your head are all numbered;" and "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow." You are much more precious in your Father's eyes than all these.

It is well to look at God in all the characters under which Scripture represents Him to us. People sometimes say, "Oh I like to read such and such parts of God's word; the New Testament is much more helpful to me than the Old;" but I believe we may pick and choose until we become great losers by it, we never really know the value or beauty of the Bible till we look at it as a great whole, and see how every part fits into its proper place. So it is as to God's character; we must look at Him as the Almighty Jehovah-the Great I Am; as the Governor of the universe, and as the Creator of the ends of the earth. Again, there is this thought in verse 20: that when we look up at the starry firmament, we may be sure that because He is the Creator He will be the Sustainer (see Colossians i. 16, 17); that because He is so strong in power they never go wrong; that because He spangled the heavens with uncounted worlds, therefore He guides their movements. And then comes the application, and the prophet says: "Have you not known enough of His faithfulness to check these murmuring, unbelieving thoughts; do vou not know who that One is who has pledged Himself to carry you through every sea of tribulation and over every mountain of difficulty; that there is no failure, no vacillation with Him?" Just as we read in James i. 17: "With whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning "-not the least shade of variation-" Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever."

"Well," but some may say, "if He fainteth not, what

has that to do with us? I do not believe He will faint: I am not afraid of trusting Him with my soul; I do not doubt that He will carry out the work He has begun in me and lead me safe to glory. Indeed, I am confident in His power to carry me through all. It is not He that fails, but it is I that faint; it is for my work I tremble, I do it so badly; I fail in the performance of it: I have no strength, no wisdom. Ah! have we not said it again and again, it is all well with me as to my soul's salvation, but there is this great, this solemn work among souls which I have to do every day? It is too heavy for me. I am not fit for it, it weighs me down,"—"Lord, send by whomsoever Thou wilt send" (Exodus iv. 13). Now look at the next verse: "He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might He increaseth strength." Here we have the outgoing of God's power as well as the indwelling of it. Here is the essential greatness of that power, and the giving forth of it to those who need—the fainting ones, the weary ones, the thirsty ones. Ha imparts it as it is needed, day by day increases the amount-larger measure to-day than yesterday, deeper draughts this year than last. Have you found it so? Do you know what this means? "He increaseth strength:" gives more abundantly, as well as unfailingly—expands as well as replenishes the vessel of your soul. Oh, for faith!—mighty faith!

(To be continued.)

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The following are the Classes from which the Notes are taken:-

THE MOTHERS' MEETING,

Monday, 2 30- 3 30,

St. Jude's Lecture Hall, Mildmay Road.

THE YOUNG WOMEN'S BIBLE CLASS,

Lucsday, 7.30,

THE BROAD STREET WARD SCHOOL, 59, LONDON WALL, E.C.

THE MOTHERS' MEETING,

Wednesday, 3 o'Clock,

SILESIA HOUSE, MARE STREET, HACKNEY.

THE LADIES' BIBLE CLASS.

Thursday (fortnightly), 11.45,

HIGHBURY.

THE FEMALE WORKERS' BIBLE CLASS,

Friday, 7 15,

(Fortnightly) 133, MILDMAY ROAD.

(Monthly) FRIARS' MOUNT, BETHNAL GREEN.

THE YOUNG WOMEN'S BIBLE CLASS,

Sunday, 3215,

133, MILDMAY ROAD.

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"Gather up the Fragments."

NOTES

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By C. P.

TAKEN DOWN BY A LADY.

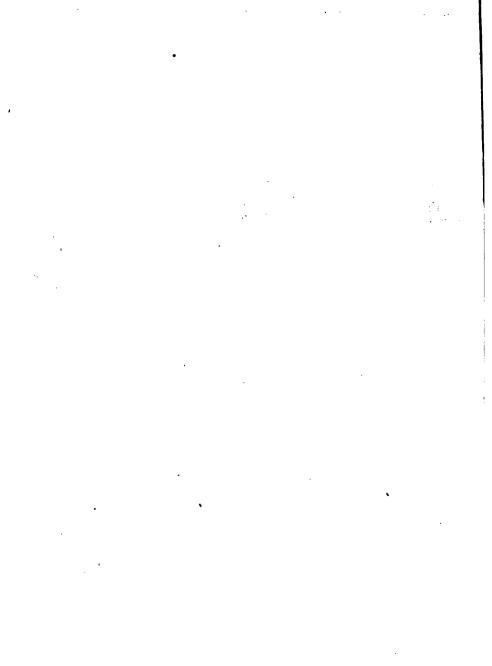
PART IV

ISAIAH XL. 28—31.

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To the Jemule Morkers' Class.

Col. i. 19-24.

"For it pleased the Father, that in Him should all fulness dwell;

"And, having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; by Him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.

"And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled

"In the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreproveable in His sight:

"If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister:

"Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His body's sake, which is the Church."

WE were speaking about the Lord Jesus Christ in His original position, as one with the Father, the beginning of the Creation of God; we looked at Him as taking priority, head over creation, first in resurrection—in all things pre-eminent, both in time and in dignity, as the first-born among many brethren; higher than the kings of the earth, exalted far above all principalities and powers and every name that is named; and now we seem to have it all confirmed and explained by this 19th verse:—"For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell."

This universal pre-eminence was vested in Him, because it was the Father's pleasure that all the plenitude of the Godhead should dwell in the Man, the Lord Jesus Christ.

To open out this glorious subject is beyond what our poor finite minds can think of, or human words express. I suppose it will take all the ages of eternity to explain it; but it is the Father's will that all honour, all dignity and exaltation, should meet in Christ, as in a focus. The circles of creation, of redemption, and of glory, all have their centre point in Jesus; and it was the eternal thought and purpose of God, that everything should be developed in Him and through Him and from Him. When we understand our true position, as members of His body, we are in no danger of trying to take any of the glory to ourselves; for we know full well that the members only exist in virtue of the life which flows into them from the living Head. Jesus is the one Head, the Exalted One, the meeting-place of all the rays of glory, the only spot where the Father's holy eye can rest. He is the centre of God's universe; and no honour, no power, no praise, no crown can be given to any other, "that in all things He might have the pre-eminence."

The word "fulness," in this verse, is a very remarkable one. It is used in Eph. i. 28, though in a different sense: "which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all." And, again, in Eph. iii. 19, where the Apostle prays for his converts "that ye may be filled with all the fulness of God"; perhaps "plenitude"

expresses it as well as any English word, because as you know Him, you know the fulness of God, and as a member of His body you receive from Him of that fulness.

Verse 20. "And having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; by Him, I say, whether they be things in earth or things in heaven." Here the Lord is set before us in a new light.

The mind of the Apostle seems, as it were, to take a retrograde glance, to see by what means He had won this position as the First-born from the dead. He must needs go back, and show how Christ must descend into death in order to be the First-born in Resurrection; that position could not be taken without humiliation, and death, and the grave; and so, justly and rightfully, the Crucified One takes pre-eminence in all things because of what He has done for His church, "having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself." I think it is quite clear that it is the reconciliation to the Father he is speaking of-God the Father, having made peace by the blood of Jesus on the cross, reconciles man to Himself-and so he goes on: "by Him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven." This seems to be the grand truth the Apostle wants to bring out. But, oh! how much the work of reconciliation involved! He won pre-eminence in resurrection by the death of the cross.

A new view of the wonderful work of Jesus is brought

before us in this 20th verse:—we have not previously seen the depths of His humiliation, have not beheld Him as the suffering Man, bearing shame as a malefactor and a condemned criminal, and yet the work of reconciliation implies all this.

Look at Eph. iv. 9, 10. You see Him there taking His place of dignity, as the Risen and Ascended One; but in order to do that, He must have been the Descended One. It gives us a wonderful view of Jesus as the First and the Last: as touching not only the very highest point, but also the very lowest! There is no spot in the vastness of space that He has not visited, and no point in time when He was not. The eternity that is passed, and the eternity that is to come, have one centre, "Jesus in the midst." He was before time, and He shall be when time shall be no more. He says Himself, "I am the First, and the Last: all that lies between I have consecrated by My presence. I descended to the lowest, and ascended to the highest, that I might fill all things." He knows where to find the archangel in his brightness, and the lowest sinner in his depth of misery. He can fit Himself into all, and deal with all, by virtue of His experience as a man and His infinite greatness as God. As very God and very Man He did the work of reconciliation, bringing back and restoring that which had been wrecked by the fall. The work of restitution, of gathering up the lost life out of the ruins of death, seems a more wonderful thing than creation itself; but

He did it all. Looking forth from the bosom of the Father, He saw that to be the Life He must be the Resurrection, He must gather up life out of death, He must bring up a living church out of the darkness of the tomb.

We come now to this mysterious expression: "By Him to reconcile all things unto Himself." There was no restoration, no reconciliation, until the blood was shed. "Having made peace through the blood of His cross," He reconciles all things to Himself. The great truth seems to be this twice-repeated one: "By Him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven." Whatever has been accomplished, it is by Him; the whole work is committed to Him, and carried out by Him. What these "things in heaven" are, we cannot fully say; but we know there is no difficulty about the "things in earth"—the wandering sheep is brought within the Shepherd's fold, the prodigal son is brought nigh unto the Father.

Some hold that the "things in heaven" include angelic beings, and think it refers to their preservation; and thus they conclude that all creation is by His death reconciled, or brought into a closer union with God. But however this may be, I cannot help thinking we have a little light thrown on the passage in Leviticus xvi. There we have a description of the Day of Atonement; and after bringing before us Aaron, the High Priest, who was to do the atoning work, the passage goes on to say, in verse 82: "The priest whom he shall anoint, and

whom he shall consecrate to minister in the priest's office in his father's stead, shall make the atonement" (showing the office was to be hereditary until the Antitype came, when it ceased for ever by His carrying the blood Himself into the Most Holy Place).

Verse 33. "And he shall make an atonement for the holy sanctuary, and he shall make an atonement for the tabernacle of the congregation, and for the altar, and he shall make an atonement for the priests, and for all the people of the congregation." There is the great work of reconciliation going on through the blood; and we notice among the things mentioned for which atonement is to be made, is the holy sanctuary, and, in Heb. ix. 22, 23, we learn that the holy place is a type of heaven. Now, why the blood is mentioned in connection with the holy place, it is not for us too positively to say, but it does seem to show us that the work of reconciliation goes beyond the men and women saved by grace; and it may be, that this verse in Colossians has the same reference as that type in Leviticus, and that reconciling blood was needed even in the holy heaven. But we must tread softly; we may well suppose that there is a breadth, a length, a depth, a height in the work of Christ which we cannot comprehend, and, perhaps, beyond what we now require to know—a mystery of love never to be fathomed till we see Him face to face, and know as we are known. This much we do see, that He must needs go down to death that He might "fill all things," in order that things which had strayed away

from their glorious centre, and lost the smile of the Father's presence, might be restored to it again; and it may be, by going down to death He drew other distant things to Himself; and that, in some way far beyond our mortal ken, He was enabled to give displays of His power which, but for His cross, could never have been witnessed.

Look at Eph. iii. 9, 10. There is a beautiful touch in those verses, showing us how our Lord's wondrous work would appear before the angels. The Church was to be an exhibition to them of the manifold wisdom and grace of God. They were to see something in the shedding of that blood they had not beheld nor understood before; a fresh field of observation was to be manifested to principalities and powers, "according to His eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord" (verse 11).

Truly, they had beheld a little of the glory before: they had seen it in the creation of all the heavenly host, in the creation of Adam, and the earth over which he ruled; but this they had never seen—a lost world redeemed; Gentile as well as Jewish sinners reconciled to God; nay, more, brought into closer relationship to Him than they had ever been: "For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell." If it had not pleased the Father to give Him all the fulness, He could never have emptied Himself as He did. Look at Isaiah liii.: "It pleased the Father to bruise Him." There is the repetition of that word in verse 10, which is

striking: "And the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand." Thus God pleased to fill Him, and then empty Him—to give Him a work to do in which He must needs be bruised by the Father's own Hand; and this pleasure of the Lord prospered "in His hands." The saving of the lost, the lifting up the fallen, the bringing in of a seed was to be counted to the Lord for a generation.

Verse 8. "Who shall declare His generation?" He had no seed to bear His name, none to follow Him and to take His place. The perpetuating of the paternal name was considered a special honour in Jewish families; our Lord was cut off in the midst of His days. Look at Psalm xxii. 30: "A seed shall serve Him; it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation." There is the seed which shall be to His Father's praise; which shall go on from age to age, a living generation. There will be no failure of issue, no cessation of the glory of His name; for His seed shall serve Him, and thus "the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand." It was for the gathering in of His spiritual children, the Church of the First-born written in heaven, that He was filled and emptied, and then filled again with Resurrection Glory. "It pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell." Look at Phil. ii. 7: in proportion to the fulness was the measure of the emptying. Wherein did He empty Himself? "Who was in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, took upon Himself

the form of a servant." Here was the descending: having emptied Himself of His glory, and having taken ' His place as Man, He went further, "He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death." Could He go further? "Even the death of the cross." He could take the death of shame, the criminal's death, as well as the death of sorrow, and go down to His tomb branded a malefactor—that was the shame; and we are told He "despised the shame," because He looked to the recompense. Then we come to His exaltation, verse 9: "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him." In proportion to the emptying is the measure of the fulness: the exaltation is in virtue of the death; and the glory follows on the shame. This verse in Philippians is quoted from Isaiah xlv. 22, 23, where He announces Himself as a just God and a Saviour.

But to return to our passage: the Apostle now comes to the practical teaching, and brings us down to the personal application: "And you that were sometime alienated, and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled." There is great force in those words, "and you." The work of Jesus touches us individually as lost sinners; and the Apostle seems to come back to this point, as if he suddenly remembered to whom he was writing. If we were to dwell for ever outside the camp, it would only aggravate our misery to see the greatness of Christ's work. But that little word you; it seems to bring us back from the grand sweep of immensity to our own poor stricken hearts. See it again

in Eph. i.: we have there the glory of Jesus described from the middle of the 20th verse to the end of the chapter. Read it thus: "Which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead:" then pass on to verse 1 of chapter ii.: "And you, who were dead in trespasses and sins;" all that lies between, about Christ's exaltation, is parenthetical. The Apostle continually writes thus. If "He reconciled" all things to Himself, we seem to hear him say, it was a vast range for almighty power,—I cannot say, I am not going to say, what that "all things" may include; but this I do say, "He hath reconciled" you—you who were alienated by virtue of your descent from Adam; you who were separated by your own personal guilt, "Being enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled;" you who were both aliens and enemies.

Is not this beautifully simple? We may read these wonderful truths in God's Word, till we seem lost in their greatness, almost overpowered by their length, and breadth, and depth, and height; and yet we have only one thing to believe for our soul's salvation, one thing to say when we go to speak to lost souls: "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners;" to save you. Is not this a comforting thought? We may feel our own intellects very weak, very feeble in their grasp, quite unable to fathom the depths of truth, and yet we can carry this simple story of grace, "And you hath He reconciled;" this message I bring, not for angels, not for people far away, not for generations gone by, nor

generations yet to come, but for you. The very simplicity of the message marks it as coming from God—God the Almighty One, infinitely beyond and above the reach of our conceptions, and yet stooping to fill the tiny vessel of an infant's mind. To be great is always to be simple. Let us remember this in all our teaching. The Bread that sustains and nourishes the life of the whole redeemed Church, can be broken into crumbs small enough to suit the need of the weakest child in the family.

And now, as labourers in God's vineyard, let us take this message; let us go in and out amongst sinners, and tell it everywhere. We want more realising faith; we want to be more under the mighty power of the Spirit of God, to know what we have received from God. Let us be closer and more personal in our dealings with God and with ourselves. If He has done all this for me, what am I doing for Him? As the eye of faith passes over this ocean of eternal love, does not the question arise, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits to me?" If He gave Jesus for me, if He gave the Son of His love to a death of shame for me, what am I doing for Him? Oh! if we had a larger grasp of what the Lord has done; if we could only see the cross, and the thorns, and the nails, and the spear, and listen to the deep anguish of that cry, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" and then hear Him say, amid the agony of that cross, "This is My body which is given for you;" do you think we could come away and measure out a little time that we could spare for Him, a

few sacrifices that we might venture to make? Should we not rather exclaim—

"Were the whole realm of nature mine, That were an offering far too small; Love so amazing, so divine, Demands my life, my soul, my all"?

Dear friends, when we hear people talk of those who have consecrated themselves to God, and have found out the joy of spending, not a few hours now and then, but their lives in His blessed service, as if they were going too far, as mere fools and enthusiasts, can we help asking, Have you ever stood at the cross, ever realised what that shameful death was, or what it is to be buried with Jesus? Measure, if you can, the love of Gethsemane and Calvary, and then answer the question, "How much owest thou unto thy Lord?"

Verse 22. "In the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreproveable in His sight."

There is something very emphatic in the words, "the body of His flesh," as if the Holy Ghost dictated these words in foresight of the errors that would creep into the church, and which soon began to shake the faith of believers, as if to meet all that was said by the gnostics and other false teachers regarding the human nature of our Lord. The words are so minute and marked: "In the body of His flesh;" that body which was capable of death, and without which the reconciliation could not

have been effected. The work of atonement must be His own, the God-man must do it Himself, in that body which was prepared for Him. (Heb. x. 5.)

He became man to save man, "to present you holy and unblameable and unreproveable in His sight." It has been disputed whether these words have to do with inherent or imputed sanctification. It seems to me that in the first instance they have to do with justification, or with our standing in Christ; but we can hardly separate the two, for what follows seems to imply personal sanctification: "holy" represents the positive, "blameless and unreproveable" the negative side of holiness. We are to be hallowed vessels unto God, and unblameable and unreproveable in the sight of others. It is true that as we are in Christ, the Holy One, we are looked upon as holv: "Thou art all fair my love, there is no spot in thee" (Cant. iv. 7); but the saved one must needs be the renewed one. We are born again by the spirit to the obedience of righteousness. When a soul is brought into union with Christ, the Holy Ghost begins to form in that believing soul the image of his Lord, and he becomes holy in proportion as he is changed into that likeness from glory to glory. The Father beholds Christ for us, the Spirit forms Christ in us.

Verse 28. "If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled." Are we not told here that the condition of our being thus presented is remaining firm and stedfast in the faith and hope of the Gospel? and again it is

added, not being "moved away" from what ye have heard and believed. That little word "if" has presented a difficulty to some minds. Let us not forget that God's truth is one glorious whole, only to be understood as He has fitted it together. We hear it said: "if God keeps His saints, how can they ever be moved away?" Ah! dear friends, the God who opens the golden gates to the victor, allots and determines every step of the race, and the runner must needs tread the appointed way. When we talk about the preservation of the saints, we virtually assert the persevering of the saints; we may transpose the words, so intimately are they bound together,—preserved, in persevering; persevering, because preserved.

Before we leave this subject, let us look at a few other passages bearing on these remarkable words, "if ye continue in the faith grounded and settled." In John viii. 31, our Lord uses a similar expression. Addressing Himself to those Jews who professed to believe on Him, He says, "If ye continue in my words, then are ye my disciples indeed;" linking persevering obedience with discipleship in an inseparable connection. Again, in John xv. 9, 10, "Continue ye in my love;" and then comes the emphatic if: "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall continue or abide in my love." The sunlight of my love is always shining on the upward path of steady on-going obedience—but nowhere else. Look at Acts xiii. 48 and xiv. 22, in both of which we find the Apostles pressing upon their converts this con-

tinuance in the faith. Observe the whole structure of the Epistle to the Hebrews, and you will find this thought constantly in the mind of the writer. We have only time to glance at it now; but you can follow it out more fully for yourselves. We take up the thread at chapter iii. 6 (and catch sight of it more or less prominently in all the following chapters), "If we hold fast the confidence." Again, verse 14, "If we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end."

We are then (chapter iii. and iv.) warned by the example of wavering, unbelieving, unstable, Israel; and in chapter v. we have brought before us the learning, obedient Son of God, "made perfect by the things which He suffered."

In the next chapter (chapter vi.) we are exhorted to go on unto perfection, in contrast to those converts who were incapable of receiving much instruction concerning their glorious High Priest (see chapter v. 11), because they remained in a childish, infantine state, instead of going forward and growing up. In the 11th verse of this 6th chapter, we have a solemn reiteration of the same truth, enforced by the example of Abraham and the Old Testament believers, who, "after they had patiently endured, received the promise." Connect this with chapter x. 35, 36, and see the two aspects of the word promise. There is the giving of the promise—"When God made promise to Abraham"—and the receiving of the thing promised. "After he had patiently endured, he received the promise." What lies between the two?

The patient doing of the will of God; the continuous path of persevering obedience—we are treading that pathway now. We have the sure word of promise; but the glory promised, the blessed fruition, is still in the distance: and because this is so, because many a stony pass, and many a heavy cross lies between, it may well be said, "Ye have need of patience,"-patience to endure, and patience to obey. And, observe another thought suggested in these passages, as well as in the one we are now primarily considering. This patience is not the mere passive endurance of a stern necessity: the Christian endures as one who is "begotten to a lively hope:" our patience is the "patience of hope." Here, in Colossians, we are so to "continue in the faith, that we be not moved away from the hope of the Gospel." In Heb. iii. 6, our confidence is to include the "rejoicing of hope." In chapter vi., we who believe the word of promise, have strong consolation, because we lay hold on "the hope set before us." One more passage before we leave the Epistle to the Hebrews, which seems the climax to all these thoughts. Chapter xii. 1, 2, "Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of faith; who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." Let us run, not impulsively, not a little way, halting and flagging, as faith grows weak and knees are feeble, but run with patience; and in order to this, fix your eye upon

the patient One, who has gone before you, who is the Finisher as well as the Beginner; who never fainted in the race, though a shameful cross was to be endured on the way; who never lost sight of the joy set before Him, though the dark shadow of Gethsemane and Calvary lay between. Jesus, the Author and the Finisher of faith, the beginning and the end, the Alpha and the Omega, is your forerunner, and He is the Son over His own house, who held fast the confidence, and the rejoicing of hope firm unto the end.

But to return to our passage in Colossians, verse 23: "Grounded and settled." Here the Apostle brings before us two thoughts,-first, he calls upon us to take care that our faith is grounded on a right foundation. that it is not like a house built upon the sand, which falls when the storms descend upon it. He would have us ascertain that our foundation is good, that our footing is secure upon the immovable rock, that our faith is not built on any mere human creed or opinion, but on Christ Himself; and then, secondly, to take care that we are settled, "that ye be not moved away by false teachers from the hope of the Gospel." Perhaps we may say with truth that many are grounded who are not settled. They know the truth of God, they have learned it intellectually, and even spiritually, but they are unstable. and therefore attracted by every novelty, and driven about by every wind of doctrine. A little eloquence in a preacher, a plausible argument in some new book, and they are fascinated, and then, in spite of all their

knowledge, driven from their moorings and tossed about on an ocean of uncertainty. It is quite true there is no point at which we can arrive in the Christian race when we cease to be learners; but unsettling is the work of the enemy,-the teaching of God's Spirit is a steady ongoing, not a shifting and drifting hither and thither. A continued unfolding of the Word of God, the word written, and the Word Incarnate, a growing-up unto Him in all things. May God keep us grounded and settled, that we be not moved away from the hope of the Gospel. May He keep us from getting unsettled in these unsettling days, when many run to and fro. "That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, with every wind of doctrine." Eph. iv. 14. And may He enable us ever to remember that verse in St. Matthew xxiv. 13, which may well wind up the thoughts upon which we have been dwelling: "He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." He who has passed through storm and sunshine, frowns, and smiles, kept by God's hand, unmoved by the scorn of enemies or the cowardice of friends,-he who continues unshaken, grounded and settled, shall be saved.

We now come to the closing part of this yerse. "Which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature," or in *all creation*, "which is under heaven; whereof I, Paul, am made a minister."

He seems to say, "The Lord's command to preach the Gospel in all the world has been obeyed; we have preached, and you have heard, and that same glorious sound has gone out among all nations. Of this world-wide Gospel, I, Paul, am made a minister." He takes up the same thought as he gave us in the former part of this first chapter—that this Gospel was not confined to the Colossians, but that it had widely spread on all sides; that he had been commissioned by God to be a preacher of this universal Gospel; and that he came to them charged with a message, which God had laid upon him to deliver.

And then follows a very beautiful parenthetical passage in verse 24:--" Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His body's sake, which is the Church." This is a difficult and yet very important passage, because it places the Church of God before us in its corporate character, as one great whole. We must remember there is no such thing as an isolated, independent child of God; and if all Christians were more in the habit of looking at the Church as a Body of which Christ is the Head, and all the members filling their places only as they minister to the completeness of the whole, much selfish littleness must needs be swept away. I think this subject of the corporate character of Christ's Church is not sufficiently dwelt upon. All the figures of Scripture represent the Church not only as individual, but as indivisible. For instance, we are members of the body, branches of the vine, stones of the temple. In each of these, our very existence implies relationship to the whole. In neither of them are the

component parts complete and self-existent, but recognised only as they fill up their respective places. if we remember that we are ministering members of one body, how intimately shall we feel ourselves concerned in the welfare of that body! How impossible it will be for us to look at ourselves exclusively, or to exaggerate. as we too often do, what belongs to ourselves. often our selfish hearts are inclined to think-" No one suffers as I do, no one has been in my circumstances, no one understands me." Now, I think one of the lessons we may learn by looking at the Church collectively is. "That there hath no temptation taken us but such as is common to man." 1 Cor. x. 13. Our circumstances are never peculiar, our trials are never singular, and the very realisation that we are sharing rather than monopolising both the suffering and the consolation, brings a soothing balm to the spirit.—1 St. Pet. iv. 12.

But we seem here to have yet another thought. St. Paul rejoiced in his suffering because he knew that the Lord had appointed a certain amount of suffering for His Church down here; and so, as he was called to pass through affliction, this thought consoled him,—that he was contributing to fill up that which remains on behalf of the whole body. The Lord Himself, as the Head, trod a pathway of suffering, one which He alone could tread; He bore in His Person, once for all, the penal sufferings of the sinner's substitute. The measure of that cup was for ever exhausted by the one sufficient sacrifice on the Cross. He trod that wine-press alone.

But, as the Man of Sorrows, He was acquainted with all the varieties of grief; and though now the Head of the Body is in glory, out of the place of suffering, yet the suffering Christ in His body is down here, and every member, every suffering saint of God, in every age and circumstance, is in fact filling up in his place and degree, the afflictions of Christ in His flesh and on behalf of His body, and thus leaving less for the whole body to endure. The Apostle seems to say, "I have the happy assurance that I am bearing afflictions which, as I suffer them. fill up what is lacking of the measure of the sorrow which Christ has allotted to His whole body; and, therefore, the more I pass through, the less I leave for the whole, 'who now rejoice in my sufferings for you.' I rejoice that I am bearing a portion of that aggregate of sorrow which must be borne by the body before the Head appears in glory." Just as we feel, individually, when we have passed through some great trial,—"Well, dark as this has been, I shall never be called to go through it again. Terrible as was the hour of anguish, it has passed by for ever:" so we feel, as we think of the whole body, "No other saint will have that suffering to bear again, now that it has fallen upon me; that cup of bitterness will be pressed to no other lips. The sorrow I have borne to-day has abstracted something from the measure of unaccomplished sorrow; the afflictions allotted are fast filling up; the once suffering Christ will soon be the glorified Christ; and, when He who is our life shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory."

The Jemale Morkers' Class.

FRIARS MOUNT, BETHNAL GREEN.

(Continued from page 96.)

ISAIAH Xl. 28-81.

"Hast thou not known? hast thou not keard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of His understanding.

"He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no

might He increaseth strength.

"Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall:

"But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."

AM quite sure the more we ask from our God, the more we draw upon that exhaustless strength, the more we receive. If we had such large faith as could demand from God more than any child of His had ever yet demanded, I believe he would delight to give it. Simple faith honours God, and He honours simple faith; the childlike confidence that asks for large supplies, and has large expectations. It is faith we want, faith which will undertake much for God, because it realises what God will do. We do not venture on Him as those who know the vastness of His resources, and the largeness of His heart, and so we see stunted puny Christians.

Oh, there is strength, there is grace enough! Venture

on that ocean of power and you will find the word true, "My people shall never be ashamed." Why do we hear believers saying "We cannot do this; we are not able to undertake that; we cannot overcome bad habits; we cannot conquer hasty or unamiable tempers?" Never did the Apostle to the Gentiles give more honour to His Master than when he said, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." Never do you more grievously dishonour Him than when you say, "I cannot do" what He Himself commands.

It is as much as to say, God is not true to His word; for there stands the promise, "To them that have no might He increaseth strength."

To make the lesson still plainer, the prophet introduces a contrast: he brings before us human strength; he says: "Summon up all you can of natural power; consider who you would think best fitted to send forth in an earthly conflict; choose the young men whose nerve and vigour is at its prime;" and what follows? Verse 30. "Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall."

Viewing the matter from a human stand-point, this may seem strange. We do not expect that the strongest and the bravest will utterly fail; but even in natural things it may be so, in spiritual things it must be so, for "to them that have no might He increaseth strength."

Ah! the Lord wants empty vessels into which to pour the fulness of His own strength, and He needs utter weakness in which to magnify His own power. Then comes the "But," in contrast to this failing human courage and mere natural strength.

Verse 31. "But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."

Here we are told that while all others fail. His own waiting children shall "walk and not faint." And how are they described? First, as those who renew their strength, who (as we read it in the margin) change their strength, continually put it on afresh, draw new supplies from the fountain; yesterday's strength will but do its own work, leaving no residue for to-day. The Christian's power, like the Israelites' manna, must be gathered day by day. And then we have the blessed assurance that those who seek shall find, those that wait upon the Lord shall receive rich supplies. And oh, how we need this renewed strength! We know there is nothing stagnant in God's creation; in-flowing and outgoing seems the law of our being, both in nature and grace, and the one just in proportion to the other. What is the succession of the seasons but the renewing of all things? What is Spring, but Creation putting forth its renewed strength? Then, again, those who understand most about the mechanism of the human frame, tell us that an entire change takes place in our bodies every seven years, and that a constant wasting and receiving is going on: there is change and renewal. All God's dealings are ever changing. So with the air we breathe, the light that comes streaming upon us every morning, the waves of the ocean that play upon the shore, all fresh, and beautiful, and vigorous, because never stagnant. This renewing of strength, I wish we knew more about it, and were never satisfied without a daily and hourly receiving. Depend upon it, if there is a labourer in God's vineyard breaking down for want of spiritual power, that one has left off drinking fresh draughts from the Spring of Living Water. There has been a failure in the waiting, and therefore a failure of the renewing. There is a great deal of weakness in the Church of God which ought not to be. I do not mean natural, physical weakness, because I believe it is in the empty, feeble vessel that our God loves to honour Himself the most; but if there is spiritual weakness, if we have not power over the world, the flesh, and the devil, power in temptation, wisdom to avoid the snares so often laid for our feet, it is from a want of receiving—the supplies have been checked somewhere: or there has not been spiritual thirst enough to drink deeply at the Fountain. It may be the world, it may be some secret, undetected sin, some little fox that has gained an entrance and spoiled our grapes; but, oh! whatever it be that is causing this lack of power, there can be no failure in the Mighty One: they that wait upon Him shall renew their strength; and be assured that as this renewing goes on, the vessels expand to receive—the capacity for holding the supply to-day, will be larger than it was yesterday.

This thought of ever-springing freshness seems strange

in the midst of a world of decay. There is only One of whom it can be said: "Thou hast the dew of Thy youth," One with whom it is always morning, One who, even in the charnel-house of the tomb, could see no corruption; it is from this living One that we renew our strength: "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink."

Oh! why are so many of God's plants withering, losing their freshness, getting feeble and puny, when they ought to be stronger and stronger? We see a few. alas! only a few, of whom it can be said that they are riper, brighter Christians than they were ten or fifteen years ago. We see some who are evidently halting and fainting, who have lost the freshness and joy of their first love. Perhaps they were pressed, very soon after their conversion, into a great routine of work, and thought that, because they began well, all would continue well with them; and then, before they were aware, and because they forgot to renew their strength, weakness laid hold on them, and the words of the prophet are too sorrowfully true (Hosea vii. 9): have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not," (If he knew it, he would surely get it renewed.) "Yea, grey hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth it not." There are the marks of decaying strength, and "And the pride of Israel he is not aware of it. testifieth to his face." (Ah! we see where it began.) The work goes on, but there is no baptism of power; the machinery prospers, but the anointing oil is lacking; the

labours are abundant, but the labourer is weak and scorched, and weary, because the dew of the morning is gone.

A few more words about this waiting on the Lord: it is a frequent Scripture expression. We have it in Psalm xxvii. 14: "Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart; wait, I say, on the Lord." The exact contrast to Israel's conduct, as reproved in Isaiah xxx. 1, 2: "Woe to the rebellious children, saith the Lord, that take counsel, but not of me; and that cover with a covering, but not of my spirit, that they may add sin to sin; that walk to go down into Egypt, and have not asked at my mouth; to strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh, and to trust in the shadow of Egypt."

They advise with one another, but they take not counsel with Me; they make many plans, but they do not come quietly and secretly to talk with Me about their work. "They go to Egypt;" they use the most approved means, but there is no waiting at the posts of My doors; they will find it an utter failure; they run about to get the sanction of this and that person, but it is of no use, it will all break down and be to no purpose. "The strength of Pharaoh shall be your shame, and the trust in the shadow of Egypt your confusion," verse 3. Now what is the opposite of all this? Look on to verse 15: "For thus saith the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel: in returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and confidence shall

be your strength." If we have very little time to spare, in which to get advice, because of our great amount of work, let us spend what we have with God. Depend upon it, you will do more with five minutes of real communion with Him, and know better how to act, than if you hurry off your knees to consult the wisest earthly advisers. Christian counsel is very valuable, but it can never take the place of our Father's guidance.

The waiting spirit is the one that hangs upon Him even in the busiest moments; that looks up continually, and says, "I know where my strength is: my Counsellor is always at hand, and my guide ever ready to direct me." I think every day we learn to be more dependent, and yet, in another sense, more independent. We hang more helplessly upon God, not daring to take the smallest step without His counsel, getting more and more fearful of going anywhere alone, in child-like dependence, putting our hand into His hand; and yet, as I said, more independent, feeling we cannot lean upon man -we cannot wait for man's approval; thanking God for all the love and help we receive from Christian friends, for it is very dear to us, but still staying ourselves on the Mighty One, who alone understands us in the very depths of our souls, and as we wait on Him, it may be in the secret prayer in our own chamber, or in the pouring out of our heart with His children in the prayer meeting, or it may be only in the upward glance, in the breathing of a sigh amidst the pressure of work—yet in each and all of these ways continually hanging on Him,

and saying, with one of old, "My soul, wait thou only upon God, for my expectation is from Him."

And what will be the consequence? "They shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint."

I suppose on the first reading of this verse we might be inclined to say, the order is reversed, the walking must surely come before the running or the mounting; but let us ask which is the most difficult attainment—when are people most likely to faint and grow weary? not in the mounting of a buoyant spirit, or running with alacrity for a short distance, but in the continuous on-going of daily walking. The sequence here seems to imply increasing attainments in the life of faith. The joyful soaring of the young believer is followed by the vigorous running, and this, again, by the patient, faithful, untiring walk.

The illustration of the eagle is frequent in Scripture: it implies both strength and constant renewal of strength. Look at Psalm ciii. 5: "Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagles." May we know much of the joy of forgiveness, and mount up, as on eagles' wings, into the presence of our pardoning God! may we know, too, the joy of service, get strength to run His messages, and to go on the Master's errands; and, then, may we learn the patient on-going—the hardest of all, because continuous.

"To walk, and not faint:" oh, that we may learn

what this means! When we have the same work to do every day, and have wearying, fretful people to deal with; when the spirit faints, and we are inclined to say "I am sick of all this!" when we have to meet difficulties again and again; when we have to go over the same ground day after day, and all, perhaps, to no purpose, only to have the return of ingratitude or misunderstanding for all our love and labour! Depend upon it nothing but waiting on the Lord will do for this, and nothing but renewing the strength will meet the Thank God! the promise is sure: "They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint." "Wherefore, lift up the hands that hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees."



"Waiting for the Adoption."

Rom. viii. 23.

Waiting amid the shadows
For the blushing of the dawn,—
Waiting amid the darkness,
For the sunlight of the morn.
Waiting, because th' appointed age
Has not told out its years,—
Waiting, because a groaning earth
Has not wept all its tears.

Toil-worn and very weary,
For the waiting time is long,—
Leaning upon the promise,
For the Promiser is strong.
Waiting, because some straying sheep
Are on the mountains still,
They must be sought, and found, and saved,
It is the Father's will.

Waiting 'mid cruel taunting
From many a scorning foe,—
Chilled by the bitter night winds,
The lamp of faith burns low.
Waiting, because a patient God
Is pitiful and kind,—
The seeking Shepherd may not leave
One halting lamb behind.

Waiting, 'mid angry billows,
For the breaking of the light,—
Heart-sick, and sad, and fretful
With toiling all the night!

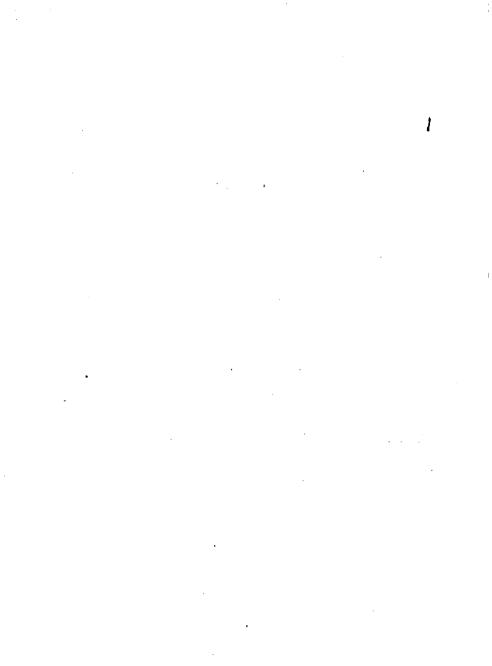
Waiting, because the Master stands
To watch the rising tide,
And He would have us cast the net
Upon the other side.

Waiting, while skies still blacken
With storm-clouds hanging low,
Eyes fail with looking upward
To find the emerald bow.
Waiting, because the Master's eye
Is on the ripening grain,
Th' impatient sickle must be stayed,
Waiting the "latter rain."

Waiting with hands still busy,
Chiding the tears that fall,
Stopping sometimes to listen,
If haply He should call.
Waiting, because the mighty stream,
Flows on with ceaseless tide,
There's room within the palace halls,
The open door stands wide.

Beguiling waiting hours,
With rapturous thoughts of home,
Breathing a yearning whisper,
"When will the Master come?"

Hark! get thee to the mountains, There is sound of distant song; The Bridegroom King is coming, For His bride has waited long!



The following are the Classes from which the Notes are taken:--

THE MOTHERS' MEETING,

Monday, 2.30-3.30,

St. Jude's Lecture Hall, Mildmay Road.

THE YOUNG WOMEN'S BIBLE CLASS,

Fuesday, 7.30,

THE BROAD STREET WARD SCHOOL, 59, LONDON WALL, E.C.

THE MOTHERS' MEETING,

Wednesday, 3 o'Clock,

SILESIA HOUSE, MARE STREET, HACKNEY.

THE LADIES' BIBLE CLASS,

Thursday (fortnightly), 11.45, Highbury.

THE FEMALE WORKERS' BIBLE CLASS,

Friday, 7.15,

(Fortnightly) 133, MILDMAY ROAD.

(Monthly) FRIARS' MOUNT, BETHNAL GREEN.

THE YOUNG WOMEN'S BIBLE CLASS,

Sunday, 3.15,

133, MILDMAY ROAD.

"Gather up the Fragments."

NOTES

BIBLE



LASSES.

By C. P.

TAKEN DOWN BY A LADY.

VOL II. PART I.

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AND

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"Gather up the Fragments."

NOTES

OF

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By C. P.

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The Female Workers' Class.

Col. i. 25-29.

- "Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God;
- "Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints:
- "To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:
- "Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus:
- "Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily."

In these verses the Apostle resumes the subject from which, in verse 23, he broke off, that he might give us the parenthetical passage of verse 24. This gospel, this glorious gospel of hope, or hope of the gospel, which He speaks of in verse 23—it is this gospel of which "I am made a minister."

Verse 25: "According to the dispensation of God, which is given to me for you." That word "dispensation" has by some been translated "stewardship." The same thought is given us in 1 Cor. iv. 1: "Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God."

Then the Apostle adds, in this 25th verse, This is the stewardship committed to me, "to fulfil the Word of

God;" that is, fully to preach the gospel, to bring the whole counsel of God before you: not one part of it only-not a one-sided view of it-but to preach it as one great whole. Notice that word "fully." Perhaps there is not a more common mistake amongst us than taking parts of God's Word, or giving undue prominence to some favourite portion or doctrine, to the exclusion of the rest. God would have us sit down as little children. with unprejudiced minds and willing hearts, ready to be taught, and to learn the lessons He has in store for us. although they may seem strange, and be such as we had not expected to learn. If Paul sought fully to preach the Word of God, let us seek fully to learn the Word of God. We have all of us more or less received truth as it has been cast into a certain mould, or tinged with a peculiar colouring; we have imbibed from childhood the views and sentiments of our associates; we have laid hold of certain portions of religious truth which have been taught us, it may be, with an exclusive and narrowminded earnestness, to the neglect of other portions equally important; and there is danger lest we should allow these prepossessions or ignorances to hamper and cramp us in the study of the Word of God. Again, we know well how soon we can imitate a peculiar phraseology. and adopt the manner of others, or imitate the style in which they have put truth before us. I am quite sure that this tends to unreality, and keeps us back from fully learning the truth of God. Let us disentangle ourselves from the use of set terms, or cant phrases learnt from

one another. There is something positively refreshing in hearing those persons speak who have lately come to the knowledge of the truth, and have not yet learnt a stereotyped mode of speech, and whose teaching comes with the simplicity of those who have learnt alone in the light of God. But, perhaps, after a little while, you find those very persons expressing themselves according to the phraseology of the sect or denomination to which they have joined themselves, and can pretty well decide whether they belong to this or that section of the Church Sometimes we hear of a Calvinistic way of putting truth, and an Arminian view of truth; or we are told that so-and-so holds certain opinions, and so-and-so belongs to such a school of thought. Surely a grieved Apostle might say to us, "Are ye not carnal?" (1 Cor. iii. 4.) Oh! that we could be simple Bible students, sitting down to inquire of our Father, in child-like humility, and coming forth with greater freshness and more telling power, because our teaching wells up from a heart filled at the fountain of living waters! I am quite sure, if we want to be good teachers, we must adopt simple language, only using words that are best adapted to convey our thoughts, and that give expression to the genuine feeling of the speaker; and let us ever teach God's truth as we have learnt that truth from Himself, not as borrowed from another.

The Apostle goes on to tell us what that Word was which he fully preached, and then gives us a further insight into the special nature of his stewardship.

Verse 26: "Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints."

This is a wonderful verse, touching on a wonderful subject: the mystery, formerly hidden, now revealed! What is it? You will find something about it in Rom. xvi. 25, 26: "Now to Him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God made known to all nations for the obedience of faith."

This is the same gospel, he says, which has been wrapt up in silence during the eternal ages, partially revealed in Old Testament times, lying, as a buried treasure, in the depths of Old Testament Scriptures, but now made manifest—preached unto all nations. We find it again in Eph. iii., where he speaks of himself as the Apostle to whom the revelation of this mystery was especially intrusted. Verse 2: "If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward." Then, verse 5: "Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto the holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit." But the most distinct explanation as to what constitutes the mystery is to be found in verse 6: "That the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same

body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel."

The mystery seems to be the bringing together of Jews and Gentiles into one body, of which Christ is the Head, as fellow-members of the family, and fellow-heirs of the kingdom—saved sinners, both Jew and Gentile, united to God's dear Son in a mystical union, to the praise of the glory of God's grace.

This wonderful fact, that redeemed sinners, Jews and Gentiles, are both gathered up into Christ, can only be made manifest in the dispensation of the Spirit. It could be traced out in the Old Testament writings as the light of gospel days fell back upon their pages; but it was not fully known or distinctly revealed, even to the prophets who wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

Perhaps our Lord refers to it when He speaks of His own teaching in the form of parables. (St. Matt. xiii. 34): "All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake He not unto them." The quotation from Psalm lxxviii. 2 is remarkable; as if in those parables was wrapt up the mystery which had been kept secret for ages, and which the Psalmist had predicted should be made known to generations yet to come, and which could not even now be fully brought to light until the Holy Ghost revealed it through the Apostle's preaching.

Verse 26: "Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and generations, but now is made manifest."

Had we time to dwell upon that word "manifest," we might gather much teaching from the Scriptures about it. Development is God's law; and the book of Church history is just the gradual unfolding and opening out to us, in time, of God's purposes in eternity. Let us look at that first promise in Gen. iii. 15. Surely here is the embryo of all New Testament truth—the scheme of redemption wrapped up in a few words. "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."

There stands the promise—the first promise of God to sinning man; and as, one after another, the prophets lived and preached and died, a brighter gleam of light fell upon its meaning, till the seed of the woman came, and, in the fulness of time, Christ crucified was preached among the Gentiles. But I suppose throughout all the ages of eternity it will be unfolding to us, and we shall learn that all we knew on earth were but "parts of His ways." As I read it, it often puts me in mind of the bulb of a hyacinth. There it is: you hold it in your hand, a little brown unsightly thing, and who would imagine the beauty it contains; but you watch it, and there is first the sprouting of the green, then the shooting leaves, till at last the beautiful flower itself appears, and all rising out of that dry, ugly root. So God can fold up all He has to do or to reveal in the smallest compass. We take up the prophetic scriptures, and the blessed seed-corn of gospel truth is there—the inwrought.

but as yet unrevealed mystery. It was given to the Apostle of the Gentiles to open the treasure-house; and the light, which in former days fell dimly on seers and prophets, now rests in manifesting power on all God's holy ones, as we have it here, verse 26: "made manifest to His saints."

I think we may be said now to be "searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand of the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow."

It seems that as the prophets wrote, they were utterly unable to fathom the depth of their own words; and as they faithfully transmitted predictions they could not understand, they were taught, as the Apostle St. Peter says, "that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things which are now reported unto you." (1 St. Pet. i. 12.)

Again, our Lord says, "I tell you many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them." (St. Luke x. 24.) As if they had a sort of indefinite longing to look on through the mist into the days of manifestation to know the truth, that was only imperfectly revealed to them in prophecy, type, or figure.

In Heb. xi. 39, we have a little more light on it: "And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise." The promise for them was still in the distance; they knew there was some won-

drous light yet to dawn—they knew they were only a portion of the great Church which was to be gathered in, that they were only the elder ones of the family; and in patient faith they waited, knowing that the vision is for an appointed time.

Look at one other passage in Daniel xii. 8—13. He tells us there very plainly that he did not understand all he wrote, and yet was evidently longing for a deeper insight into and more light on his own prophecies; but he is told that the time had not come. The Lord says, "Go thy way, Daniel; for the words are closed up and sealed, till the time of the end." Thus Daniel waited with a sealed book in his hand, while we wait with an unsealed, open book. (See Rev. xxii. 10.) Shall we not search it? shall we not seek for more divine light, that it may be unfolded to us with greater clearness as we walk the journey of life?

Turn now to a passage in 2 Tim. i. 9. There the Apostle, speaking of the grace which was given in Christ Jesus, before the world began, says, in verse 10, "It is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." Here again we have the unrolling of God's truth, in contrast to its former concealment—its unveiling at the appointed time, having been hid in the counsels of God from all eternity. He had decreed it in the fulness of time to be manifested by Christ Jesus. Scripture teaches us that it was in the mind of God before the world began—

MILDMAY WORKMAN'S HALL.

President.

Rev. W. Pennefather.

Mon. Secuetary & Gneasuner.

Miss Savory, 69 Mildmay Park. N.

The Treasurer of the Mildmay Workman's Hall begs to return her most sincere thanks to the Friends who kindly forwarded Donations for the above Institution in answer to the Appeal inserted in the last number of "Gather up the Fragments."

The Work of the Hall has been carried on very successfully in all the departments during the last few months, but, now that Winter has come bringing with it its contingent of miseries and stories of starvation and destitution, may we again be permitted to plead earnestly for more help. We do not ask for mitted to plead earnestly for more help. We do not ask for money to start a new Society or Mission but to carry on the operations of one already in existence, the machinery of which operations of one already which has already proved a great blessing is in active work and which has already proved a great blessing to the poor people living in the neighbourhood.

Reference need only be made to the accounts in the "Times" and all the Daily Papers to prove that, unless active steps be taken at this season to feed the starving ones, famine fever will taken at this season to feed the Managers to make the Hall a centre therefore the desire of the Managers to make the Hall a centre from which good cooked food may be sold at a nominal price from which good cooked food may be seen stream that no one will and sometimes even given away. We feel sure that no one will and sometimes even given away. We feel sure that no one will and sometimes even given away. The feel sure that no one will and the advisability of this plan and it seems that, owing to doubt the advisability of this plan and it seems that, owing to the fearful starvation that is rending hearts on all sides, and the fearful starvation this winter to the Christian Public to opportunity is offered this winter to the Christian Public to come forward in support of such a movement, remembering come forward in support of such a movement, remembering that they will thus somewhat follow in the steps of their Divine that they will thus somewhat follow in the steps of their Divine that they will thus somewhat follow in the steps of their Divine that they will thus somewhat follow in the steps of their Divine that they will thus somewhat follow in the steps of their Divine that they will thus somewhat follow in the steps of their Divine that they will thus somewhat follow in the steps of their Divine that they will thus somewhat follow in the steps of their Divine that they will thus somewhat follow in the steps of their Divine that they will thus somewhat follow in the steps of their Divine that they will thus somewhat follow in the steps of their Divine that they will thus somewhat follow in the steps of their Divine that they will thus somewhat follow in the steps of their Divine that they will thus somewhat follows in the steps of their Divine that they will be seen the steps of the steps of the steps of the steps of the step

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that a Church, composed of Jews and Gentiles, redeemed by the blood of His Son, should be made one body in Him, their living Head. The gospel preached by Paul was no new thing. God had preached it before to Abraham; but, because the promised seed was not yet come, the glorious mystery remained through ages and generations a hidden thing.

Again (Titus i. 2), we read, "In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began, but hath in due times manifested." What a wonderful sketch this seems to give, as the eye looks back into the eternal ages, and sees the promise and the covenant made with Christ the seed of Abraham, and then looks forward to the "due time" of its accomplishment! Nothing can hurry, nothing can delay the manifestation of the mystery, for all that has to do with its unfolding is settled in the eternal purpose.

But, dear friends, there is one thought that must strike us as we look at these wonderful verses. If we are living in the days of the fuller manifestation of this blessed truth, which angels desired to look into, which prophets dimly understood, which our Lord wrapt up in parables, how solemn is the responsibility laid upon us to study it! When we think of the time wasted by Christians in frivolous conversation, in reading books which can profit them little, and then consider what a life-study is open to us in this book, worthy of all the faculties God has given, we are confounded and ashamed. What will it be, when we come to the end of the one life

allotted to us here, to discover that, owing to our own idleness and indifference, we have made so little progress in the knowledge of the mystery which the Spirit was so ready to reveal? shall we not be stirred up, while yet there is time, to more earnest study of God's Word, that we may seek for His truth as for silver, and search for it as for hid treasures, and realise the fulfilment of the promise, that they "who hunger and thirst after righteousness shall be filled?"

Verse 27. "To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory."

"Among the Gentiles." That was the point to which the Apostle was especially calling their attention—that this mystery was never unrolled until the times of the Gentiles had arrived. All the mystery is wrapt up in the person of Christ, because He is the Life and the Life-giving One, alike to Jew and Gentile. All that the Church receives is from Him: the life flows from the living Head. We cannot speak too strongly on this point. There is no life or power either in the Church collectively, or the members individually, but as it flows from our risen, ascended, glorious High-Priest, who is the Head of His body, the Church. So when Christ calls to Himself Jews or Gentiles, to compose that Church which is to glorify Him for ever and ever, He reveals Himself to them and in them as the hope of glory; and, pouring the mighty stream of His own life

into their souls, sends them forth, as messengers of life and hope, into a dead and hopeless world.

"Which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." There has been a great deal of dispute whether the preposition should be translated "in" or "among." It is equally true either way; for only as we have His life in us now, can we have the pledge or embryo of future glory. Christ is now our hidden life, and by-and-bye He will be our manifested life. There is no hope apart from Him, no brightness in the future except as we look at Him. Sometimes the mind gets overwhelmed with the greatness of truth, lost in the depths of mystery, dazzled with the brightness of the glory. It is well that we may just come back to this one thought—that we may dwell upon the words given to us here, "Christ in you, the hope of glory." And when He who is our life shall appear, then shall we appear with Him in glory.

The outer man decays day by day, but the inner man is renewed. The earthen vessel may crack, but this will only cause the internal light to be more apparent. As the tabernacle is taken down, the glory within becomes more visible—the breaking of the pitcher shows forth the lamp that burns to the Master's glory.

Verse 28. "Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man, in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus."

The Apostle brings us back again to his preaching. He has carried us off into fields of exploration, going out into the length and breadth, the depth and height of the love of Christ, and searching down into the mystery God had to show him, when suddenly he returns to the practical point, "whom we preach." There is a lesson for us here. If we know a little of the mystery of God's love, let us tell a dying world of a living Jesus. Is it not a comfort, when we get almost bewildered with the greatness of God's truth, just to ask ourselves first, Well, what am I to live upon? and also, What message have I to take to sinners? The Apostle sets before us not only "Christ in you, the hope of glory," but also "Christ, whom we preach." So personal, and yet so world-wide! So simple, and yet so deep! An old writer says, "There are shallows in God's Word in which a lamb may wade; there are depths in which an elephant must swim." You can take the bread of life and crumble it into little lessons for an infant's mind; and yet the united powers of the redeemed Church can never scale its heights, or sound its depths.

"In all wisdom." There seems to be the warning of sinners on the one hand, and the instruction of the children on the other. Repentance and faith both preached, and what for? that we may present every man "perfect in Christ Jesus." There is something very striking in the individuality with which he regards his hearers: "every man," used three times—"warning every man," "teaching every man," "to present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." The Apostle seemed to have an individual interest in each single soul God had

committed to his care, that each one might be full-grown and matured; he was not satisfied that they were saved, merely: he wanted them to be taught in all wisdom—well-instructed believers. I think we should learn a lesson here,—the exceeding value of even one soul cannot be over-estimated; but let us learn, too, that there is such a thing as growing in grace—that God would not have His children to be always babes—that the minister's work is not only to convert, but to edify and build up souls.

Verse 29. "Whereunto I also labour, striving according to His working, which worketh in me mightily." If every believer may be said to wrestle, surely this is emphatically true of the Christian minister. St. Paul not only taught, but laboured. It is the same word as is used of our Lord in the agony in the garden (St. Luke xxii. 44): "And, being in an agony, he prayed." Thus St. Paul was not satisfied with proclaiming the gospel, but he says, I agonise, I strive as in a contest, for this convert, for that precious soul; labouring fervently for each one in his prayers. It is just the opposite of any thing which can be done easily. Does it not give us a word of counsel for our work?

Ah! we know little of this striving in spirit, this agonising for souls, which the Apostle speaks of here: "Whereunto I also labour, to present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." True it is that our first object is to save souls. We do well to seek out the lost ones, and to cry to God on their behalf; but that is not all—we

must carry those on our hearts before God who have been brought to know Him: must earnestly strive that these may be presented full-grown and matured in the faith and hope of the gospel.

And, dear friends, all this is a no easy task. We hear people say, "Why do you take up such laborious work? why do you burden yourself with so much care? why go out of your way to deal with difficulty and sorrow?" They say in spirit, as one of old, "This be far from Thee, Lord. Pity Thyself. Spare Thyself." Is there not a great deal of this sort of feeling amongst Christians? They allow a little useful employment is a good thing: but when it comes to life-work, to spending and being spent for the Master, they call it enthusiasm, and tell us we are wrong if we forget the claims of society or neglect our own interests. What says the Apostle? I agonise for souls, as in a contest; and then he gives us his power for labour. He seems to say, I could not do it: my hands would soon hang down, and my knees grow weak and weary; this agony would wear me out very soon; but "I strive according to His working, which worketh in me mightily." This is what we want-more of Christ in us, more of the Spirit's power; and then there will be a mighty working. We see much natural energy and energetic action, and it should all be used: but we must remember that this is not in itself necessarily grace: we can only really be doing God's work in proportion as we are striving according to His working, which worketh in us mightily. Let us ask ourselves,

What is our work? Is it His, undertaken in His might, accomplished in His strength? Are we striving—agonising, according to His working in us? Oh! we shall have blessing, we shall have much power, when every hour's service is measured by His working—when we are so filled with the Spirit that He goes hither and thither with us. Let us take this passage and make it a test of our labour; praying fervently that we may neither be self-indulgent idle workers, nor labourers going forth in the energy of the flesh, but that we may be like the Apostle Paul, laborious in the power of the Spirit, "striving according to His working, which worketh in me mightily;" using the measure of talent He has given to His own honour and glory.



The Jadies' Bible Class, HIGHBURY.

REVELATIONS xix. 12.

"His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns."

THE verse I have read seems to be a sort of climax to the subjects which we have been considering for some weeks.

"On His head were many crowns." This is the clause on which I wish particularly to dwell to-day; because after we have been speaking about the different dispensations, the different dealings of God, in the past history of the Church, whether national or individual, I suppose the centre truth and winding up of all is this, the crowning of Jesus. The Son of God makes Himself the son of Man, and, having done the work of Atonement, and taken up the manhood into glory, God the Father commands that He shall be crowned, and that to Him every knee shall bow.

We find this truth of the glory of the God-man taught in plain language throughout the New Testament, as it is scattered throughout the Old in type and figure. Our Lord says that it is the will of God that "all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father" (St. John v. 23). The same truth is expressed in Col. i. 18: "That in all things He might have the

pre-eminence." It is the will of God that He should not only be glorified with the glory which He had with the Father before the world was, but that He should be crowned also as the One who has taken up fallen humanity, redeemed it, restored it, and brought it back into a place of honor—an honor far exceeding that which could have belonged to it in the person of the first Adam. He is crowned, not only in virtue of His having achieved the work of creation, but also as having accomplished the still greater work of restoring a lost and ruined world, by uniting with His own that nature which had fallen so low, and in that nature bearing the sinner's punishment and conquering the sinner's foe.

The crowning of Jesus with His many crowns is a wondrous subject. He has the crown of Deity, as coequal with the Father. But in what sense does He wear many crowns? We may gather this by comparing together various parts of Scripture. Perhaps the three principal aspects in which we shall find the crowning presented to us are these—Jesus the universal Monarch, the Messiah-King of the Jews, and the Bridegroom-King of the Church: though these include many others.

To-day we shall only be able to take one view of Him as the crowned Monarch, namely, that under which we find Him presented to us in Psalm viii., and which is explained and amplified in Heb. ii. It is very beautiful to see the somewhat misty shadowing and sketching out of truth, in the Old Testament, developed and worked out in the New. The one seems to give us

the outline, and the other fills in the details. Here we have the Psalmist considering God's wondrous dealings in bringing glory to Himself by such apparently insignificant means.

Verse 1: "O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is Thy name in all the earth!" literally, "O Lord, our Governor;" for the Psalm is clearly addressed to God, and praise ascribed to Him, as the Ruler or Governor of earth in the person of His Son.

Verse 2. "Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast Thou ordained strength, because of Thine enemies." It is Thy will to take the babes, and to make them trophies of Thy grace, that the enemies may have nothing to say—to do such strange work that it may still the voice of the opposer. Our Lord quotes this verse in St. Luke x. 21: "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes."

It is interesting to find the New Testament taking up the language of the Old—the little touches given us in the one throwing light upon the other. Looking at our Lord's mind from the human point of view, it might seem as if at this time there came in upon His vision a fresh view of God's dealing with sinners—that the Father would vouchsafe to take the little ones, the weak, unlikely ones, and through them bring glory to Himself.

Verse 3. "When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars which Thou hast

ordained." "When I consider Thy works in creation:" the Psalmist's mind travels on, and he exclaims, "What is man, that Thou art mindful of him?" When we look at the greatness of God's works, the thought arises, "Who am I, that He should regard me?" Then the Psalmist, from looking at man collectively, speaking of him in the broadest sense, passes on to man individually, and adds: "And the Son of man, that Thou visitest him?"

Verses 5, 6. "Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of Thy hands; and Thou hast put all things under his feet." This was true of Adam till he fell. We remember that he had universal dominion, and that all the creatures were brought to him to be named. We might have only caught a little glimpse of light on this somewhat obscure passage, if it had not been opened out for us in Heb. ii. The Apostle, after quoting the Psalm in verse 6: "What is man, that Thou art mindful of him, or the Son of man that Thou visitest him?" goes on to say, "We see not yet all things put under him," that is, not yet under the glorified manhood. You must carry your thoughts from the first failing, sinning Adam to the second Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ. He is crowned now, but not visibly. He is crowned at the Father's right hand, but He has not yet manifestly received the crown of universal dominion; in the Apostle's words: "All things are not yet put in

subjection under His feet." This universal dominion, as we have seen, was originally given to the first Adam, but he lost it; he was God's representative, His vice-gerent in Paradise; he held a high position there: all submitted to him as their lord; and that authority, so soon forfeited, is to be restored to man in the person of the second Adam (1 Cor. xv. 24, 25). This is one of His many crowns. Jesus the son of Mary, and yet the Son of God, shall wield the sceptre of the universe.

Now turn to verses 45, 46 of this same chapter. "The first man was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit." It is a beautiful passage. The first Adam had life breathed into him by another, and was made a living soul; the second Adam has life not only in Himself, but for every one who believes in Him; that mighty life is breathed into all who are united to Him by the quickening Spirit. Just as in that familiar story of the woman with the issue of blood. She touched the hem of the Saviour's garment, and received healing and blessing. So does the sinner now receive virtue by contact with Jesus. You remember our Lord's words: "Virtue is gone out of Me." Her trembling fingers touched the living one, and by that touch, life was communicated to her; she drew near to Him, and He to her; the two were brought into contact; then His fulness flowed out, and her need was satisfied. It is the same now:—if we want to be healed of sin, we must draw near to the living Saviour; there must be contact between us and Him. He touches you.

and you touch Him. He speaks to you, and you speak to Him. His life meets your death, the sap rises into the withered branch, the life-blood flows through the stagnant veins, and you are quickened who were dead.

We hear people talk a great deal about what conversion is, and what it is to be saved, but can we not sum it all up by saying it is just this, "contact with Jesus;" for thus and thus only the dead soul lives. thought may often help us as we look around on the masses of lost souls, and try to bring them to Jesus. It is a blessed thing to realize that all day and every day He may be saying, as He said when the woman touched Him: "I perceive that virtue is gone out of Me." Although we may know it not, miracles of grace are going on in a lost world. Jesus is touching dead ones, and bringing them to life. Let us think of this, instead of trying to understand metaphysical arguments, and fine-drawn distinctions as to what faith is, and what it is not. This taking up of life out of death is one of the thoughts suggested as we look on to the crowning day.

Again, the inheritance of this glorious Monarch is a redeemed inheritance. We know that manhood, as entrusted to the first Adam, fell, and sank into ruin: was it to be always in ruin, or was God's beautiful work to be restored? In His rich mercy He opened a door of hope—promise, type, and prophecy alike spoke of a Deliverer; and God's chosen people Israel were taught something of His work by the law of redemption which

was continually carried out before their eyes. We find it in Leviticus xxv. There are two acts of redemption mentioned here—the redemption of the land, and the redemption of the man. Read from verse 23—28. Here we see that if a poor Israelite, after having sold any part of His possession, found himself unable to redeem it, it might be redeemed by the nearest of kin, but that he only could perform the redeemer's part. These laws of redemption of course primarily refer to the Jews, and the same law which applied to their land applied to themselves. Verses 48-52. But the type is surely of more extended import. Fallen man had sold himself to the great enemy. Could any one of our race redeem himself? Had man anything to give as the price of his soul? Could he, by any act of his own, purchase again this earth, once his fair inheritance, now stained with the traces of the curse? Thank God the Redeemer was found. The Son of God took flesh, did the kinsman's part, and, in doing so, earned the crown of redemption.

If you will turn to the Book of Ruth, you will see the Jewish law practically set forth. We there find a Jewish kinsman acting the Redeemer's part—stepping forward to do for the family of Naomi what they could not do for themselves. They had gone to a foreign land and lost everything. Naomi, aware of the law of redemption, came back to her own country, and was evidently prepared to claim the duties Boaz owed her as a kinsman. In chapter iv., we have Boaz responding to the call as

an honourable Jew. There was only one reason to prevent his acting at once—he thought there was a kinsman nearer than himself, to whom he explained the position of Naomi. At first this man professed his readiness to fulfil his part, but subsequently there arose a difficulty. Boaz told him that the day he bought the land he must also redeem the widow, and take Ruth to wife. At this he scrupled, and after the usual ceremony, by which he could transfer his right, had been performed, we hear Boaz saying unto the assembled council of elders, verses 9, 10, "Ye are witnesses this day, that I have bought all that was Elimelech's, and all that was Chilion's and Mahlon's, of the hand of Naomi. Moreover Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of Mahlon, have I purchased to be my wife, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance, that the name of the dead be not cut off from among his brethren." Here is the redemption of the possession, and the redemption of the woman. Now how do we find this figure carried out in the work of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself? Look at Galatians iv. 3: "Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world: but when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth to redeem them that were under the His Son. law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." The word, redemption, is applied in this way all through the Old Testament. We were in bondage under the elements of the world; we were in the circumstances of a man who had sold himself and all his possessions, had at

last lost everything and become absolutely a pauper—one who could claim nothing and could do nothing-who had no hope, unless a redeemer would come forward to act for him. Who was this Redeemer to be? the Apostle goes on to teach us, verse 4: "God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law." Mark these words-"made of a woman." The Lord could not have acted the part of Redeemer if He had not been made of a woman, for He would not otherwise have been next of kin to us. It was the power of His Godhead which gave Him the ability to redeem, but it was by the relationship of His manhood that He gained the fitness for the work. "As bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh," He stood up as our next of kin, and as God He stood forward to build up the ruin which no merely human hand could have restored.

As the second Adam, therefore, He wears first the crown of redemption, and then the crown of universal dominion.

We have seen that in the Jewish law both the land and the person were capable of redemption; but some will say, Have we any warrant in Scripture for believing this earth will be redeemed and again made holy? I do not see how we can carry out the figure without such a belief, for the two redemptions seem to me to go together. The Lord Jesus Christ says, "I will take My Church, and will make that redeemed, restored Church My bride;" and does He not say, I will redeem her lost possession,

Rom. viii. 19: "For the earnest expectation of the creature," or the creation, "waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God," namely, waiteth till the Son of God will come forth with His many crowns, when the many sons brought to glory will be manifested with Him. The whole of creation is waiting for the manifestation of the perfected, completed Church. In this eighth chapter of Romans, the Apostle has brought us up to a climax which starts from chapter v. In virtue of our union with Christ, He seems to carry us with Him through death and the grave into resurrection life. Then he takes the believer through the transitional condition of chapter vii. (for he evidently shows us that the state described there is not a satisfactory one for the child of God), into the spiritual freedom of the eighth, and then up to that blessed consummation—that glorious hope of the Church—that morning without clouds when our salvation will be perfected. We wait for this, "the redemption of our body," when this tabernacle will for ever shake off its last trace of sin and of the curse. But the saints are not to enjoy their blessedness alone. In the 19th verse of Rom. viii., St. Paul personates Creation, as if it knew the day of its redemption and all its privileges would not be realized until the manifestation of the sons of God-that until they are gathered in, all the possessions which the Kinsman has purchased are as it were in reversion, and wait to be claimed by Him.

Verse 21. "Because the creature itself also shall

be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God; for we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth together until now, and not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves." Even we which have the life, and light, and joy of the Holy Ghost, groan for what? redemption of our body. In that glorious day every sound of pain, every sight of decay, everything sorrowful, will have passed away, and that for ever. True it is, the soul is now redeemed, as St. Paul says, earlier in the chapter: "The spirit is life," but the body bears the stamp of sin; the light is within, but the earthen vessel is broken and defiled. It is well when we feel the infirmities of the body, the inroads of disease, to realize that this is only the waiting time, that it is but a little while of suffering, and weariness and toil, until He come forth with His many crowns: and even the taking down of this feeble, earthly tabernacle, is only hastening forward the climax of our joy. There may be a waiting time after the saint drops the earthly tabernacle. is now like the High Priest, gone into the Holy Place, and it is not until He comes out that the whole Church shall be fully blest. It may not be long before the veil is put aside, and He comes forth to glorify His waiting people; to bless both those that sleep in Him, and those that wake up in His likeness. But we have an earnest of our redemption even now. An earnest is not only a promise, but something given us beforehand

as a pledge of what is to follow. (See Eph. i. 14.) In this passage the Apostle, after speaking of God's electing, forgiving love, of the Jewish and the Gentile times running out, draws our attention to the fulness of times, when all things will be gathered together in Christ Jesus. Then, in verse 12, he speaks of the crowning of the God-Man; and, in verse 13, tells us we were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is an earnest of our inheritance, until "the redemption of the purchased possession." He gives us the Spirit as the earnest of the inheritance. That inheritance is purchased, but it is not yet given, because the time is not yet come.

Whether He will make redeemed earth the dwellingplace of glorified man, we are not told. The subject does not seem clear enough for us to speak dogmatically. Still there are little touches to be gathered up here and there which may throw light upon the subject. It is well, however, to remember that where God has not distinctly revealed, we can only inquire, and wait patiently for the full manifestation of the truth hereafter. We must not forget, moreover, that abstract truth is unprofitable, if it is only dwelt on intellectually; our aim should be to make it bear practically upon our daily life. If Jesus has redeemed the earth from sin and Satan, and if He is to reign over it, and we are to share the honor with Him, "what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness?" is the prospect that is set before us,-if the Man Christ Jesus who went down to the grave, to shame and

ignominy, and became a curse for us, took our nature. in order to be our Kinsman—if He calls us to be fellowheirs of His glory, partners with Him in all that He is and has-ought we not to live as becometh those who are called to so great honor? Our blessed Lord gives us a lesson upon this subject in St. Luke xii. After speaking about all the things that are so loved and admired and sought after by the children of this world, He seems to say, "No wonder, they have nothing else to depend upon, to rejoice in, nothing beyond to look for, therefore they must seek a goodly portion here." Then, as if turning His back on the world, to which He had given a very solemn word of warning, and looking toward His own little band, He says, verse 22: "Therefore I say unto you, take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, neither for your body what ye shall put on "-you have another calling, another object altogether, a very different aim in life from that of the world, Do you "seek first the kingdom of God, and all other things shall be added unto you? Your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things."-Not such things as the world may think necessary, but such as He judges to be needful, all these things shall be added unto you. Your Father will take care of that. He will never leave you. nor forsake you. You have got His faithful word, verse 82: "Fear not little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." He does not promise you all that men are craving after, but He promises you a kingdom—a place with Him on His

throne—to be sharers of His glory, when He wields the sceptre of universal monarchy,—Can you not leave all other things in His hands?

Surely our God gives us so much that we are constrained to drop the baubles of earth. He satisfies His children's desires by bestowing upon them such riches that they must needs let go the perishing things of time. Oh! that we lived in the full consciousness of the measure of blessing He is ready to bestow, trusting Him to give us all that we need, and getting brighter and brighter views of the eternal kingdom, and a fuller grasp of what the inheritance is for which we are waiting. Then should we live more and more as becometh the heirs of such glory. May God give us all grace so to do!



The Mothers' Meeting.

Acrs v. 12-14.

"And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; (and they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch.

"And of the rest durst no man join himself to them: but the people magnified them.

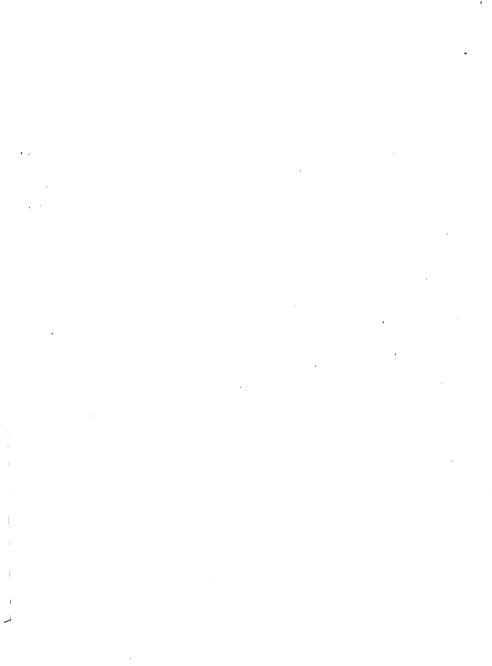
"And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women."

HIS chapter begins with a very solemn history of a man and woman who joined themselves to the Church of God, and tried to persuade the Apostles that they were true and upright, and that they were endeavouring to do all they could in the cause of God. Ananias and Sapphira saw people giving their property and their talents to the Lord's work, and noticed that those who were very earnest even sold their possessions that they might have the more to give. Ananias and Sapphira, that they, too, would like to be considered very generous and very religious, sold a piece of land which belonged to them, and when they had done this, the devil put it into their minds to tell a lie about it. They brought part of the money which they had received to St. Peter, and laid it down at his feet as if it were the full price of the land. The Apostle said, "Is it?" And they answered, "Yes, it is;" and thus "they agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord."

I have heard some people say, when they have been accused of not speaking quite truthfully, "I said nothing false, though I did not tell all the truth. I did not tell a lie, though I was not quite open." This history shows us what God thinks on the subject. Verse 4: "Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God." He seems to say to him, "You were not obliged to bring your money; but what you did bring should have been brought with the word of truth, and not with a lie." Verse 5: "And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost." God loves truth, and He hates all hypocrisies and lying. Verse 7: "And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in. And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much? And she said, Yea, for so much." She acts exactly as her husband had done: they had conspired together to tell that lie so hateful to a holy God. Verses 9 and 10: "Then Peter said unto her. How is it that we have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out. Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost: and the young men came in, and found her dead, and carrying her forth, buried her by her husband. And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things." It was a

very solemn lesson from the most High God to show how he hates lying and falsehood of every description. and how abominable in His sight is hypocrisy, or pretended service. Now we come to verse 12: "And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; and they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch." The Apostles were awestruck, but they were not afraid: they knew well enough that their God was a holy God, and was jealous for His great name and for the purity of His Church; and this terrible event seems to have drawn the Christians closer together. A great trouble often drives friends together. God's children often know more of one another in dark days than ever they did in bright ones, and it seems to have been so in this case; for we read, "they met with one accord in Solomon's porch." No hypocrites durst join them, "but the people magnified them, and believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women."





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LASSES.

By C. P.

TAKEN DOWN BY A LADY.

VOL II.-PART II.

ACTS V. 12-14.

AND

HEBREWS II. 5-13.

LONDON:

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The Mothers' Meeting.

Acrs v. 12-14.

PART II.

OW I want you to notice four points in this little history. First, this great trouble which came on the Church drove believers closer together. Oh, dear friends, take care to keep near together. Love is of God. Never forget that division is the devil's work. Perhaps nothing makes him more angry than the sight of a happy, united Church. I know if we are not each and all upon our guard, the root of bitterness will soon spring up, and some little trifling thing, it may be, will be used to separate us. You remember the words of our Lord, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." I am quite sure that nothing makes heaven so rejoice, or hell so angry, as a united people. Oh, let us then beware of jealousies, or suspicions, or unkind stories repeated from one to another; which so often cause division. We may have been very happy together; we may have reason to praise God for much that He has done for us; and while we long and pray for more blessing, we do well to bless His name for what He has given. He has surely been among us; and now, in this meeting. I trust we have many who truly know and love Him, and who also know a little of the joy of loving the brethren; but, depend upon it, the first sign

of weakness will be there: the devil will throw in some apple of discord, something to separate those who love and serve the Master; oh, pray that he may not succeed. I think God has given us hearts to love and feel for one another; but we shall not be let alone: our adversary goeth about seeking to stumble and to divide as well as to devour. Let us determine, in God's strength, that we will have nothing to do with any one who would sow discord among brethren. God's blessing rests on a congregation, on a meeting, or a family, when one pulse of love beats throughout the circle; but nothing less than the power of the Spirit of God can keep any one of the members from the assaults of the enemy, and one disaffected one "destroyeth much good."

Now we pass on to our second point, which we gather from the words, "And of the rest durst no man join himself to them." By "the rest," seems to be meant the world outside. Many had been joining the Church before, making a profession, without the real heartwork which alone joins to the Lord; but when they saw this terrible judgment upon falsehood, they trembled. No false professors dared join themselves to the little band; but God's Spirit so graciously wrought among the people that true believers were not kept away, for we read in verse 14, "And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women." Hypocrites were alarmed, but true hearts were drawn nearer to God when they saw such awful proofs of His hatred of sin.

Thirdly, "The people magnified them." That is, the

people felt that mere talk and outside profession was not accepted, so they bore testimony that these Christians were really true and holy people. It is a glorious thing when the world is constrained to bear testimony to the earnestness and holy living of the people of God; we are always thankful when we hear worldly neighbours are led to say, that they can listen to our words, and do give us credit for being sincere, because they see our profession carried out in our daily walk. The world notices trifles, as we call them; and I am sure we can never be too careful about the little things of daily life, such as even our tone of voice, our homes, our dress, our manners, that everything connected with us may recommend our religion.

I have heard a worldly person say, "Oh, I do not believe that So-and-so is converted, she is so untidy, she leaves her children so dirty and uncared for;" or, again, "So-and-so is never at home: she goes to meetings, but she is a very poor wife and mother;" or, again, "Such an one is fond of her own pleasure and amusement, and cares very little to help a sick neighbour." Ah, what we want is to be "epistles known and read of all men." Worldly persons notice our habits, whether we are rich or poor, and if they see us caring about show and finery they do not think much of our religion. It is a narrow way we have to walk in, but it is not too narrow for Jesus to walk with us. Oh! do not let the world look at you and say, "Is that rude behaviour your Christianity? is that bad temper what your religion teaches?" or, "Are

those sharp cutting words learnt at the Bible-class?" But let the world look on and say, "There is a change at any rate: So-and-so is indeed a different woman to what she was." It is a glorious thing when the life of Christ in His servants is so clear and distinct that people who see us cannot help remarking on the change wrought, and magnify the Master. Oh, think what it is to bring dishonour on that precious name—the name of Shall we not plead very earnestly to be kept faithful and consistent? The world does not know all your troubles of heart, all your secret anxieties or inner conflicts, but still, unconverted people do know well enough whether you are glorifying your Father in whatever you have to pass through. I know it is a hard fight sometimes, and though the trials come to us in different ways, they surely come to every pilgrim in the wilder-Perhaps one in poverty has learnt that God's day is to be kept holy, and yet the earnings on Sundays were more than on any other day, and it is a hard thing for faith to shut up the shop when money is scarce, and the owners hardly know which way to turn, or how to put bread into the mouths of their children. But oh, it is worth while; depend upon it you will never be sorry for what you give up for Him who has done so much for you. He promises not to leave or forsake us, and He never yet broke a promise; but He does not promise to keep us out of trouble; the word is rather, "I will be with him in trouble;" and again, "Ye must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God."

Dear friends, it is a rough world, but it is the school in which He is preparing us for heaven. If God took all the trial away at once, it would be as if a mother said to her boy, "You don't like school; you need not go any more." If God answered our prayers as we would sometimes wish, it would be like that foolish mother saying to her child, "You need not learn any more lessons; you can give up school and do as you like." God is training us, and dealing with us as chil-Perhaps some of us in poverty, or some in sickdren. ness, may have prayed for the removal of the trouble; but God knows all the time it is the best discipline to prepare us for the home He is preparing for us; and if we will only trust Him, He will help us along every step of the way, and when school days are over He will usher us into heaven.

To pass on to our fourth point, "And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women." As we have seen, it was a time of trouble in the Church, because of the solemn judgments God had poured out. Perhaps some thought God had dealt hardly, and punished too severely. Faith says, shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? Natural feeling shrank and trembled, but for all that God worked, and richly blessed, and believers were added to the Lord. They were not frightened away, just because they were true and whole-hearted. It is very easy to add a number of names to a roll, or for our meetings to become large and well attended; but it is true work when "multitudes

both of men and women are added to the Lord." is what we want. Sometimes I think we are getting slack about this. He has added to Himself (and we thank Him for it), some here and some there, from amidst our number; but oh, we want more souls, not added to the meeting, but to the Lord. I ask, how many amongst us here to-day have been added to the Lord? It is not for me to judge. I dare not, if I knew you much better than I do. God must do His own work; may He search and try us! Many of you have sat here long, and yet I am not quite sure that it is true of you, that you have been added to the Lord. I want you to ask yourselves the question, each one of you Must it not have been a happy time to the to-day. Apostles, and is it not to ministers and teachers now, when they see men and women joining themselves to the Lord and to His people? Perhaps those who have held back many a year are now saying, I want it to be real heart-work in my soul, and not mere profession. Those of us who are believers, shall we not pray then for souls to be brought to the point, to be decided for Christ, and for many more to be added, "multitudes both of men and women." Surely among these streets surrounding us on every side, in this densely-peopled district, God has more to be gathered in yet; and I want you so to pray, to strive, to live that you may be the instruments of gathering them in; and if we are to do this, we must intercede for the power of the Holy Ghost to rest upon us. Nothing so stays the current of

grace among the people outside, as when believers lose the power of the Holy Ghost. If we want the work of conversion amongst us, let us look well that we are a holy, loving, working people.

May the Lord help us, and give us a real desire for souls. Nothing is worth living for but our Master's glory. I know you may not have much time for what is called working for Jesus; but still you will have such a hungering, earnest desire for souls that you will be praying for the heathen, praying for God's people and ministers who are in the forefront of the battle, and taking such deep interest and pleasure in all work everywhere that is done for Jesus, that you will seem to have a part in it; and then, in your own sphere, you will be doing all you can for Him among your own neighbours: living Christ before them, and bringing up your little ones to love and serve Him. May He teach His own children to shine in His light!

Ah! dear friends, God has spoken to us very lately by the death of one of our number, who little thought she would never sit amongst us again; and does He not seem to say to us who are left, "Eternity is near, life is short: plead for never-dying souls, fetch them in, live for God, and pray that you may be ready"?

N.B.—The lady who takes these "Notes," believes it will add to their interest if the readers know the result which followed from this meeting amongst the poor mothers. It truly seemed as if the earnest words which they heard that afternoon, so poorly expressed by the "Notes," thrilled through their souls; and, stirred up by the Spirit of the living God, they remained with one accord, when it was over, to plead with Him, not only for divine power for themselves,

but for the conversion of perishing souls around. It was evident that the desire was afresh laid on many hearts, to be made the instruments of blessing, and that "multitudes might be added to the Lord." The questions were asked by one and another, "How can we act in this matter? What would the Lord have us to do?" A few days afterwards a request was conveyed to Mrs. Pennefather, by her Mathers' Meeting, to allow them with their husbands to assemble for tea. In a fortnight's time, between 200 and 300 men and women thus met together to hear the unsearchable riches of Christ unfolded to them. Through the instrumentality of the "Mothers'" Class, many were there that night who had never before been present; and there is much reason to hope that at the Great Harvest Day it will be found that untold blessing has arisen from this simple effort.



"Mishing for the Pay."

Acts xxvii. 29.

"They cast four anchors out of the stern, and wished for the day."

In the horror of great darkness,
In the starless midnight gloom,
'Mid the shricking of the tempest,
'Mid the hissing of the foam:
When the sons of men are quailing,
When the strongest faith is failing,
Sailor! cast an anchor, wishing for the day!

When the chilly sea-fog curtain,
Gathers close with stealthy tread,—
While weird voices strangely whisper,
"Breakers, breakers, close ahead,"—
In the agony of keeping
That stern watch that knows no sleeping,
Sailor! cast an anchor, wishing for the day.

When a more than midnight darkness
Hangs its heavy pall of clouds,—
When a worse than ocean tempest
Rattles thro' the shiv'ring shrouds,—
When the life-blood is congealing,
When the heart and brain are reeling,
Christian! cast an anchor, wishing for the day.

When the icy hand of sorrow

Lays its grasp upon thine heart,

And the very thought of thinking

Makes thine inmost being start,—

When the pulse of hope is failing,

When the last faint star is paling,

Christian! cast an anchor, wishing for the day.

When the One who's gone before thee,
In the bitter, thorny road,
Bids thee trace the bleeding foot-prints
Of the wounded Son of God!—
When the willing spirit chooses,
And the writhing flesh refuses,
Christian! cast an anchor, wishing for the day.

When the corn of wheat is dying,
In its dark, forgotten tomb,
And the glowing golden harvest
Scarcely glimmers through the gloom,—
When the hand that sows is weary,
And the barren land looks dreary,
Christian! cast an anchor, wishing for the day.

When the sound of coming judgment,
Falls on many a startled ear,
And a voice is on the mountains,
Lo! the Bridegroom draweth near,—
When earth's bravest sons are quaking,
And the world's foundations shaking,
Christian! ride at anchor, 't is the break of day!

C. P.



The Indies' Bible Class, HIGHBURY.

Hebrews ii. 5-18.

"For unto the angels hath He not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak.

"But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him?

"Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of Thy hands:

"Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him:

"But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man.

"For it became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.

"For both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren.

"Saying, I will declare Thy name unto my brethren; in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto Thee.

"And again, I will put my trust in Him. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me."

VERSE 5. "For unto the angels hath He not put in subjection the world to come."

This little word "for" confirms the assertion in

verses 2 and 3—that the ministration of the new covenant was put into the hand of One greater than the angels. The Apostle had been arguing that the Lord Jesus Christ came as the great Prophet, greater than all who had preceded Him. He had proved that as the Son of God He was greater than the angels—that He had taken the highest place as His right, in virtue of His Sonship. Then he proceeds to show that if the law which was introduced by the subordinate messengers of God was binding, the message must come with a tenfold authority when the messenger is the only-begotten If, under the ministration of the old dispensation, transgression received its just recompense, how much more shall they be punished who reject that Gospel which was brought in by the Son of God Himself. is all summed up in the question, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?"—that is, if we neglect the salvation purchased at such a price, and offered at the hands of such a Mediator. The Apostle evidently implies, in the third and fourth verses, that the ministry now undertaken by the Lord Himself had been in some sense committed to angels in the legal dispensation. There can be little doubt of the ministration of angels at the giving of the law at Sinai. It is implied in both the Old and New Testaments (see Acts vii. 53, and Gal. iii. 19), and it is plain that the Apostle, in mentioning "the word spoken by angels," had reference to the law of Moses. Then, as I said before, he goes on to say that the ministry of the Gospel is, in the first place,

committed to the Lord Jesus Christ, He being the Prophet of the new dispensation—the great Prophet who was to sum up in Himself all that other prophets had spoken; and we, who have received the message of salvation so clearly delivered to us—this great salvation, purchased at so great a price, spoken by so great a Prophet, delivering from so great a punishment, and making us heirs of so great glory—how shall we escape if we refuse these offered mercies.

But there is more still in the argument: when the Lord Jesus Christ withdrew from His visible ministry, the angels did not take it up, it was not given back again into their hands, but human instruments were chosen to proclaim it. It was first spoken by the Lord—He was the first great preacher of His great salvation; and it was confirmed by those who heard Him, the Holy Ghost, by signs and wonders following, by spiritual gifts and wondrous results, witnessing to the Apostles, and to those who succeeded them, according to His own will.

Thus the Apostle brings us out of the angelic dispensation—the dispensation committed to the hands of angels—and he brings us into that new order of things ushered in by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, when the words of life were committed, not to angel messengers, but to human lips. "God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and with gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to His own will." The Holy Spirit was given to Christ without measure (John iii. 34); but to the Apostles, and to all

who followed them, it was and is distributed in various measures, and with diversities of gifts and differences of administration, according to His own will.

Oh, dear friends, when we realise this marvellous fact, that God carries on the ministry begun by His Son by means of human instrumentality; when we learn that He puts the glorious message of His Gospel into the lips of redeemed men, who can not only say that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, but He came to save me, how great is the responsibility resting upon each one of His followers, whether in speaking or in listening to the Gospel of the grace of God.

"For unto the angels hath He not put in subjection the world to come whereof we speak." We must always remember, in reading this Epistle, that the Apostle speaks from a Hebrew point of view. It is written to Hebrews. Though he was the Apostle to the Gentiles, yet he was a Hebrew, and was therefore perfectly competent to enter into Hebrew as well as Gentile prejudices and feelings. Evidently, here he speaks pre-eminently as a Jew, and places himself as side by side with Jews. He knew just what their opinions would be, what their education had been, what were their preconceived notions and their particular difficulties; and, understanding these matters so well, God used his pen to instruct the Hebrew mind in the mysteries of the new dispensation. Hence, perhaps, the expression "the age to come," or "the world to come," implying, as it seems to do, the

new dispensation, for this was entirely "to come" to the mind of the Jew. It was not so to those who had lived with the Lord Jesus, and heard His words, and followed Him during His life on earth, watching Him every day until He went back to the throne of glory. To them it would indeed seem that a portion of the new dispensation had run out, but it would not be so to the Jews. Hebrew converts were only at this time beginning to understand that in Jesus of Nazareth was summed up all the stream of prophecy, all the types and all the foreshadowings of Old Testament days. With them the dispensation was pre-eminently a new one,—it was all "to come."

You will find that interpreters differ as to the extent of that expression "to come": as to whether it means merely the present Gospel dispensation, as it runs out here before the millennium, or whether it extends over the whole future glory purchased by the Lord Jesus Christ for His Church, as well as the dispensation during which the Gospel is to be preached to sinners. But they all agree on the point that this new economy is the one introduced to us by Jesus as the Messiah.

Perhaps the first thought that might naturally pass through the mind of the Jew as he read the words of St. Paul would be, "But are we to lose the angels? In that case we shall be worse off than before. Are we to have an invisible Messiah, and no angelic ministry? and shall we be gainers by the change?" St. Paul seems to answer this strain of thought, while he holds most firmly

to his original assertion. He points to the angels as still ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation, still going on their errands of mercy to the children of God, bringing Peter and John out of prison, but bidding them to go and speak to the people the words of life. Having thus introduced the new economy, ushered in by the Lord Jesus, and committed not to angels but to men, he carries them back to their own Scriptures to prove the truth of his argument. In passing I would ask, is it not strengthening to our faith in Old Testament Scripture to see how the whole of this Epistle is interwoven with a tissue of quotation; how it is all based upon a substratum of Old Testament truth. It is well in these days of scepticism, and of all sorts of dangerous influences, to have our minds grounded and settled in the truth of God's holy Book, that we may be prepared to meet those who would speak disparagingly of any portion of it. If the Old Testament is not God's own Word to man, how then can that New Testament be worthy of credit which deliberately confirms and endorses If the Old Testament be not God's Revelation, we must surely give up the Epistle to the Hebrews. Apostle first refers to the 8th Psalm, and, though at other times we have said much relating to it, yet the structure of this chapter seems so based upon it, that we can hardly omit a further allusion here. It is one of those beautiful prophetic portions of Scripture which stretches over a wide range both of matter and of time. Verses 1 and 2—the greatness of God, and the apparently small and insignificant means by which He is pleased to work—seem all at once to burst upon the Psalmist's mind as something very marvellous. "Thou hast set Thy glory above the heavens." This earth, that looks so large to us, is not large enough to contain Thy glory; it is altogether above the reach of our feeble minds, and yet it hath pleased Thee "out of the mouths of babes and sucklings" to "declare Thy truth, and bring forth Thy praise." And why? "That Thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger." Then the Psalmist looks up to the greatest exhibition of creative power: he lifts his eyes to the firmament above him, and he says, verses 3, 4, "When I consider Thy heavens," &c.

"What is man?" This poor, puny being seems too insignificant to be thought of after considering Thy greatness and Thy magnificent works; yea, what is man? And then comes the answer of verses 5 and 6. These are the very verses which the Apostle takes up in his argument with the Jews, as he points out that it is not God's will that the angels should now be the administrators of His Word. The dispensation in which God had thus used them has passed away, for he says, "Look at your own Scriptures; go back to the 8th Psalm; hear what one in that psalm testifies,—that this same man, who seems so small and so insignificant, even he is ordained by God's sovereign will, and in His holy purpose, to be set over the works of His hands."

But what are the thoughts uppermost in the minds of the Jews as they read the words—"We see not yet all

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things put under him"? The Apostle says:—"I want to explain how it is; I want you to know what the meaning of this is, 'We see not yet all things put under him.'"

"Look back to your own Old Testament history, and remember the time when for a little while man held the sceptre which God put into his hand as He made him His vicegerent and representative on earth to administer its government. What then? Adam sold his birthright; Adam, listening to the voice of his wife, deliberately put into the hands of the usurper the kingdom which God had intrusted to him. By an act of sad disobedience Adam handed over the government of the world to the devil, and man fell; man, whom God had made a prince, became in his wreck and ruin a vassal of his greatest enemy. But is it always to be so? Was God's glorious work to be always trampled upon by the usurper, ruined by man's folly, and ruled by Satan's authority? That seems to be the point to which the Apostle brings us, We do not now see all things put under him. There is a sad confusion; we look out upon the world and we see no reigning king, no visibly controlling headship, no wide-spread holiness: we do not seem to see this 8th Psalm fulfilled. We wonder what it all means, till we read the beginning of verse 9 of Hebrews ii., "But we see Jesus." We behold Him, for the word is stronger in this verse than in the former one. We look at Him, we see Him with the eye of faith, but not yet with our natural eyes. We are

waiting for our adoption, waiting for the redemption of the body, waiting for the "morning without clouds" which may very soon dawn; but, meanwhile, though we search in vain for this glorious sight of man in universal dominion over the world, yet faith pierces the clouds, goes beyond what is visible, and sees Jesus.

Notice that He is brought in here for the first time as Jesus. The first chapter had to do with Him as the Son of God, taking His place as the Heir, as the only-begotten Son, as the Creator of the universe, as one with the Father; but now the Apostle brings Him upon the field of vision in a new character, and proves that He is not only better than the angels as the Son of God, but better likewise because of His great work as the Son of Man. The two chapters must be read together in order to see the force of the argument—the Almighty Son of God in the first, Jesus the Son of Man in the second, and Jesus Christ the Lord, superior to the angels, in both.

"But we see Jesus." We look at Jesus; we pierce the darkness, get beyond the mists and fogs of earth, and behold Him who was made a little lower than the angels, because He took that nature which was originally lower than the angels, and in that nature He suffered death, and for the suffering of death God crowned Him with glory and honour; the eye of faith looks at the throne where He sits as the crowned one beside His Father; and there we see not only the mighty God, the only-begotten Son of God, but we see a man that has

suffered death—we see a Lamb as it had been slain; we see the marks of the spear, the thorns, the nails; and as we look at what that man has done who bears the marks of death, we see the crown; and yet it is not the crown of Deity, it is not the crown of Sonship, which He had with the Father when angels bowed before Him in the past ages of eternity; but it is the diadem of one who is crowned with glory and honour because He has tasted death for every man.

He took man's nature by the will of His Father, and tasted the death which was passed as an irrevocable sentence upon that nature in its fall, that sentence which could not be annulled or avoided, and under which every man must needs pass. Yes, He tasted that death from which there was no possibility of escape; and for what? that He might deliver the prisoners, and set the bound ones free. The Apostle is proving to those to whom he wrote that it was God's will to raise humanity to a place higher than the angels; and though man, who was originally lower than the angels, fell from the position which God had assigned to him, yet now, by the restoring work of Jesus, He lifts that fallen manhood, and carries men, not to the level they once occupied, but to a place higher than the angels. Jesus, the Son of Man, takes a crown and wields a dominion which could belong to no angel, and to which He henceforth raises humanity by virtue of His own death and resurrection. The Apostle has proved in the first chapter that the Son of God takes the highest place as His inheritance from

all eternity, and in this second chapter he shews us the Son of Man taking the place of honour as the Redeemer of fallen humanity, and lifting up to that high place the ruined ones whom He was pleased to save.

We pass on to the tenth verse, where the Apostle says, "For it became Him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." It became, or it was not beneath Him, it was part of God's great plan, that the sufferings involved in bringing many sons unto glory should be undertaken and accomplished by His own Son. It pleased the Lord to bruise Him. It is an interesting fact that the word in the middle of this verse, "the Captain" corresponds to that used in the twelfth chapter and second verse, "the Author and Finisher." In that chapter the Apostle appears to take up the thought that he touches here. In all the writings of St. Paul there is a constant recurring to the thoughts and words already before the mind, as though he loved to dwell upon the precious things he is receiving and communicating.

It pleased the Father when He planned to bring many sons unto glory, sons who deserved nothing but wrath, when it pleased Him to give these erring ones a place with His own well-beloved Son, He was pleased that His Son should take the nature lower than the angels, the nature that had sinned, and that must die, and in that nature pass through all the stages of sorrow, suffering, and punishment, which the sinning ones had

deserved; for the Captain of their salvation must needs be made "perfect through sufferings."

I suppose this expression may be taken in a twofold When we speak of the Lord Jesus Christ being made perfect through or in suffering, we speak of Him officially, not morally. As the holy Son of God, He was essentially the perfect one; but He must be the complete sacrifice, the perfect High Priest; he must become the kinsman, and do the Redeemer's work, whatever it Perhaps the words may also be taken in involve. another sense, as we have it in Hebrews v. 8, "He learned obedience by the things that He suffered." experienced it; He became perfect in the school of suffering; He became, in other words, a perfect adept in that school, and knew every winding of its dark and sorrowful chambers—" a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief."

> "Christ leads me through no darker room Than He went through before."

It pleased Him not only with the realising grasp of His mind, but in the actual experience of His own life and death, to taste every bitter cup, to enter into every phase of anguish that his saved ones should ever have to endure; it pleased the Father to make the "Captain of our salvation perfect through sufferings."

Verse 11. "For both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren."

I suppose the word "sanctify" may have various

bearings, into which we have not time to enter to-day; we must follow the Apostle's argument, and gather its especial meaning here. You will remember the Lord Jesus Christ speaks of Himself in St. John xvii. 19 as "sanctified." "I sanctify Myself;" and because we are sanctified also, He is not ashamed to call us brethren. By sanctifying us with Himself, He has made us the children of His Father; and this seems to be the great truth that the Apostle would teach us in this passage. We become the children of His Father when He takes us up as His adopted brethren, and because we are the sons and daughters of His Father, He cannot call us anything else but brethren. When He takes the manhood into union with the Godhead, and when in that manhood he suffers the penalties which sinning man had deserved; when He carries that manhood into glory, He takes us there as sons and daughters of His Father, and, therefore, He Himself calling us brethren.

You see the word, "bringing many sons and daughters unto glory," touches the key-note. Jesus looks at the saved ones whom He has made children of His Father, and He calls them brethren. He gazes at His own finished work—He sees of the travail of His soul, and exclaims, "I ascend unto My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God;" and then He adds, "Go and tell My brethren." They are brothers now in a sense they never were before. We seem to hear Him say, "I have elevated this poor weak humanity and

taken it up, not only from its weakness, but from its ruin and degradation. I have lifted the poor from the dust, and the needy from the dunghill, and I am going to make them not only princes, but brethren. I have made them children, sons of My Father; and the sons of one common Father must needs call one another brethren." It is a beautiful line of thought, and the quotations immediately following are to prove that the Lord Jesus Christ Himself uses the expression, "brethren." And each of those Scriptures to which the Apostle sends his readers back is of deeply-interesting import in this connection.

The first of these is taken from Psalm xxii. 22. will declare Thy name unto My brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise Thee." If you look at the previous verses of that Psalm, you will see that it is after the suffering, after the deep humiliation, after the hiding of His Father's face—it is after all this that he raises the note of triumph in verse 21: "Thou hast heard Me." He was accepted—the clouds had passed away; for He had despised the shame and endured the cross, and the work was finished. "Thou hast heard Me." "I will henceforth declare Thy name unto My brethren, and in the midst of the congregation," or in the Church, "will I sing praises unto Thee." Jesus leads the song of triumph, which is the song of Moses and of the Lamb. The choir seems as though not only joined, but led by the Lamb. We have Moses in the old, and Jesus in the new dispensation, singing in unity.

And again, "Behold Me and the children whom Thou hast given Me." The Father had accepted them as His sons in virtue of the price paid for them, and the work being done for them, they were brought into the presence of the Father with the words, "Behold Me and the children whom Thou hast given Me."

Oh, dear friends! surely the very thought of this sonship to God and brotherhood to Jesus involves a great responsibility. Does it not seem to ask the Apostle's question, What manner of persons ought we to be? we who, by virtue of this wonderful work of Jesus which it pleased the Father He should undertake. and which He willingly took upon Himself when He said, "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God," are made heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ? Did a Triune God perform this wondrous plan for us sin-polluted unworthy ones? The Father, the Son, and the Holv Ghost entering into council to do this work, the Father sending His Son, the Spirit of God anointing Jesus for the work, and He undertaking and accomplishing all, that we might be made sons of God, and, by virtue of being sons of God, brothers and sisters of the Lord Jesus. I say, what manner of persons ought we to be? Am I really joined in brotherhood to the Lord Jesus Christ? Am I a child of God, an heir of glory? Is it possible that I, born of a sinful race, shall yet sit with Him on the throne of His glory? Ah! there is another question. Am I living a separated life?—separated from a world that knows nothing about Jesus,—as a

member of the Royal Family, who shall have a crown and a throne in the everlasting kingdom?

We know what we expect from royalty. We know that it would be a matter of great surprise to us if one of the royal princes was to be found mingling with the children of the peasantry, and doing as they do. We should think it strangely out of place. So it is, I think, with many things that are not absolutely sinful, but are simply unbecoming those who aspire to live as the Saviour. I do not speak of those who mingle in the world's follies without reserve, but of those who know something of their high calling in Christ. Dear friends, these are our school-days. We are under tutors; and when our education is completed, we shall rise to the higher and the nobler inheritance which awaits us, and which has been bought and prepared for us by our Elder Brother. The treasure is laid up for us—the estates are all in reversion.

Oh! is it not a sorrowful thing that God should ever see His children, His purchased ones, those for whom such a price has been paid, those for whom such a kingdom is prepared, losing their time, trifling with the world, playing with its toys, and so conducting themselves that those who look on them have a difficulty in determining whether they belong to God's pilgrim family or not. It seems to me a very solemn thing that we should thus forget ourselves. We like to talk about our privileges, and rejoice in the glorious doctrines of the Gospel; we thank God, as we take up the Bible and

read of these mysteries of grace; we rejoice to speak Christ lifting up fallen humanity from the dust, and raising it to His own throne; we like to read of our glorious affinity to Him in virtue of His own wondrous work, and the power of the Spirit which is given us; and then we go forth to trifle with our Master's time, to waste His purchased property, and to grovel amid the dust of a world that hates Him! Is it so?

We know not what angels are doing now—at least we know nothing beyond the fact that they are ministering to the heirs of salvation; but I often think they must have a sorrowful ministry, not because we are sick, and poor, and sad—it is their happy work to minister to us then—but because they see in our conduct so little honour done to Him before whom they veil their faces as they cry, Holy, holy, holy! because they see Him wounded in the house of His friends. Is it true that we are nearer to Him than angels? Is it true that

"Our next to kin, our brother now, Is He to whom the angels bow"?

And shall angels pay Him such reverence, and bow before Him with such loving homage, and His children forget Him? Shall those who are purchased with His own life-blood think it too much to give Him a life-service? Shall they be found mingling with the ranks of His enemies, and betraying His cause? May God give us grace to live as those who have but one thing to do, as those who are watching for their redemption; waiting for the morning when they will take their places as sons

and daughters of the Lord Almighty, as the brothers and sisters of the Son of God.

Is it possible that though He is not ashamed to call us brethren, we are sometimes ashamed to own our royal brotherhood? May He pity and pardon us, and, laying on our weakness the right hand of His power, lift us out of our miserable unbelief and shameful worldliness, and let men and angels see that we are a peculiar people, bearing some resemblance to Him whose name and dignity we share.



Aot Aow.

Mark v. 18.

"He that had been possessed with the devil, prayed Him that he might be with Him."—

Nor now, my child,—a little more rough tossing—A little longer on the billows' foam,—A few more journeyings in the desert-darkness,
And then the sunshine of thy Father's Home!

Not now,—for I have wand'rers in the distance, And thou must call them in with patient love; Not now,—for I have sheep upon the mountains, And thou must follow them where'er they rove.

Not now,—for I have loved ones sad and weary;
Wilt thou not cheer them with a kindly smile?
Sick ones, who need thee in their lonely sorrow;
Wilt thou not tend them yet a little while?

Not now,—for wounded hearts are sorely bleeding, And thou must teach those widow'd hearts to sing; Not now,—for orphans' tears are thickly falling; They must be gather'd 'neath some sheltering wing.

Not now,—for many a hungry one is pining;
Thy willing hand must be outstretch'd and free;
Thy Father hears the mighty cry of anguish,
And gives His answering messages to thee.

Not now,—for dungeon walls look stern and gloomy,
And pris'ners' sighs sound strangely on the breeze—
Man's pris'ners, but thy Saviour's noble free-men;
Hast thou no ministry of love for these?—

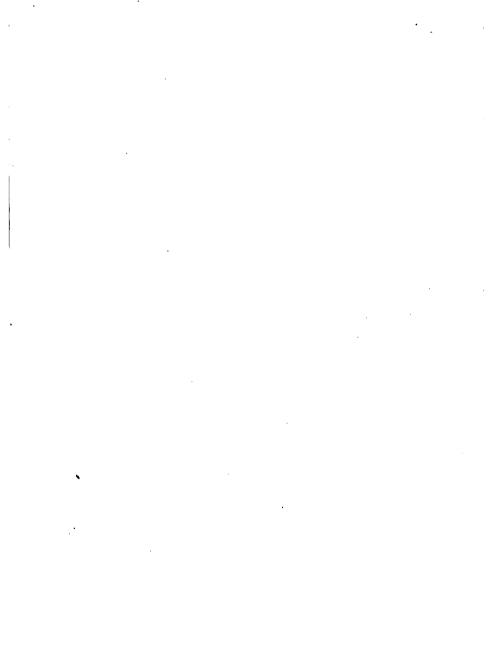
Not now,—for hell's eternal gulf is yawning,
And souls are perishing in hopeless sin;
Jerusalem's bright gates are standing open,—
Go to the banish'd ones, and fetch them in!—

Go with the name of Jesus to the dying,
And speak that Name in all its living power;
Why should thy fainting heart grow chill and weary?
Canst thou not watch with me one little hour?

One little hour!—and then the glorious crowning— The golden harp-strings and the victor's palm,— One little hour!—and then the Hallelujah! Eternity's long, deep, thanksgiving psalm.

C. P.





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